

## **National Forest Advisory Board Meeting**

April 15, 2015

Mystic Ranger District

### **Members Present:**

Chairman Dick Brown, David Hague, Jennifer Hinkhouse, Danielle Wiebers, Lauris Tysdal, Jeanne Whalen, Nancy Trautman, Linda Tokarczyk, Bob Burns, Mary Zimmerman, Wayne Bunge, Tony Leif

### **Members Absent:**

Alice Allen, Lon Carrier, Susan Johnson, David Brenneisen John Gomez, Mike Verchio, Craig Tieszen, Keith Haiar

### **Forest Service Representatives:**

Craig Bobzien, Jerry Krueger, Scott Jacobson, Beth Doten, Steve Kozel, Jason Virtue, Kerry Burns, Dave Mertz, Twila Morris

### **Others:**

Approximately five members of the public were in attendance. Three Congressional Representatives were also in attendance; Kyle Holt (Noem – R, South Dakota), Mark Haugen (Thune – R, South Dakota), and Katie Murray (Rounds – R, South Dakota).

### **Introduction & Welcome:**

**Brown:** Call the meeting to order, 1:00 p.m. Welcome to our April 15<sup>th</sup> National Forest Advisory Board (NFAB) meeting. I would like to invite all members of the Board to sit at the table; all members and alternates.

We have a very full schedule, exciting and interesting schedule with a lot of things happening here on the Black Hills National Forest.

For the members of the public, my name is Dick Brown, and I am the Chairman of the NFAB. At the end of the meeting, we'll have time for public input, and we would like your comments to pertain to the topics at hand. We have 16 members with alternates assigned; if you are not able to address the Board with your questions, please talk with someone on the Board. We welcome that you are here and if we have the opportunity we'll give you some time to comment. Please put your cell phones on vibrate or turn them off.

### **Approve the Agenda:**

**Brown:** One modification to the agenda today; we'll move the Bark Beetle Blues video before the Northern Long Eared Bat (NLEB) update. For today's agenda, I would entertain a motion to accept the agenda with the modification? Motion made by Bob Burns second by Tony Leif. All in favor say aye, opposed say no; the agenda is approved.

### **Approve the March Meeting Notes:**

**Brown:** Approve the minutes of the March 18<sup>th</sup> NFAB meeting. One correction is needed; the spelling of Jeanne Whalen's name; it is misspelled in the notes. Twila will make the correction. Is there a motion to approve the minutes as edited and distributed? Motion made by Jeanne Whalen second by Linda Tokarczyk. All in favor say aye, opposed say no; the meeting notes are approved.

### **Housekeeping:**

**Bobzien:** Thank you Mr. Chairman, again welcome to all and our many guests today, it's great to have you here. Today's agenda is full, but right off the top we'll do the election of Vice Chair which is very important; the Chairman of the Board will lead that however he sees fit.

Other agenda topics; the NLEB was listed, so we'll discuss that today; Kerry will talk with us about that and tell us what this means to us. The Bark Beetle Blues video and the veg strategy are tied together; it's all about how we tell our story. Looking forward to the Bear Lodge Project update; most of us were standing on the site and seeing that first hand last summer. District Ranger Kozel will lead that today, that will be very timely. We'll be looking at the Fire Season outlook, and the weather forecasting; looking forward to Darren Clabo as well as Jay Esperance, Jason Virtue, and Josh Van Vlack. We work together with partners, so it's a great chance today to describe how we work together.

### **Meeting Protocols:**

**Bobzien:** We have great agenda, great to see you all. We also have the media in attendance today. I will only be here till about 3:00 today, I will have to travel to another meeting.

## **Hot Topics**

### **Legislative Updates - Federal**

**Brown:** Next up, we'll move to legislative updates; first will go with Mark Haugen with Senator Thune's office.

**Haugen:** Hello, my name is Mark Haugen; I'm with Senator Thune's office. The Senate is back in session for a six week session on the tail of a five week session. The last session was spent on the budget, and for the first time in several years they passed a budget.

They passed the bill which determines which Doctors get reimbursed by Medicare payments as well as issues regarding tele-health. The Sex Trafficking Bill is back on the agenda. The Attorney General nomination was made. The Budget Conference Agreement is used to bring the House and Senate together.

We've been receiving several calls from people trying to travel overseas to go hunting or just traveling with guns and have run into hiccups. We checked with ICE and DHS as well as Customs, and found out that last year they tried to go all computerized and they ran into problems with that. People are showing up at the airport with guns and they find out they can't

take them. Typically you just need a certificate from the police station that shows you are the owner of the gun, and you would be fine. We've had meetings in DC with the agencies.

**Hague:** When is Senator Thune going to announce his run for presidency?

**Haugen:** All indications are that he will sit this one out as far as the Presidency.

**Brown:** Thank you Mark, if there are no other questions for Mark, we'll move on to Kyle Holt with Kristi Noem's office.

**Holt:** Thank you. Like Mark said, there is not a lot of movement on legislation right now. They are trying to do away with the Death Tax. In a few weeks, we'll be looking at appropriation hearings, which is eventful.

Kristi had the opportunity to be in the Black Hills recently; she held a military event and last week she did a youth leadership conference with 150 high school kids at the School of Mines

**Brown:** Thank you Kyle. If there are no questions for Kyle, we'll move on to Katie Murray with Senator Round's Office.

**Murray:** Thank you, I am happy to be here. Senator Rounds chaired his first EPW subcommittee hearing; this is one of the issues he has been excited about, because as you know he thinks there is too much regulation by the Government.

Senator Rounds also helped form a payment innovation caucus, which is focusing on electronic payments; making sure that paying on line is safe; with all the fraud that is going on, he feels this is an important issue.

Over the recess, the Senator formed two campaigns. One campaign is that he wants to hear everyone's regulation story. Please go on line and e-mail your story to the Senator. The other campaign is a photo contest, amateur photographers. Submit your photos to Senator Rounds, and they will have photos put on the website.

**Leif:** There is a letter coming from the South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks and the Senators to Secretary Vilsack regarding open enrollment for CRP plus to encourage continuous sign up. Your office will get a letter today, and we would like to have Senator Rounds sign on to that; Conservation is important to our State. The deadline is noon tomorrow to sign on. Senator Thune is leading that charge, and we would appreciate Rounds signing on as well.

**Murray:** Thank you for that, I will make sure the Senator is aware of the letter.

**Brown:** Thank you Katie, we appreciate you being here. Are there any more questions for Katie? If not, we'll move on to the State of Wyoming. Commissioner Whalen, would you like to give an update?

**Whalen:** I've reached out to the Wyoming Congressional Delegation, and I received a message from Representative Lummis. As I mentioned last month Representative Lummis is the Chair of the Western Caucus. I'll read from the message:

Forest Service Drops Groundwater Directive Washington, D.C. (April 15, 2015) –Yesterday during a Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Power and Oceans hearing, U.S. Forest Service Deputy Chief Leslie Weldon announced the decision to halt work on the controversial Proposed Directive on Groundwater Management released last year by the Forest Service.

In response, Western Caucus Chairman Cynthia Lummis (WY-At large), Vice Chairmen Mark Amodei (NV-02) and Paul Gosar (AZ-04), and Chairman Emeritus Steve Pearce (NM-02) issued the following statements:

“The U.S. Forest Service’s decision to give up on the proposed groundwater directive is a critical victory for state primacy over groundwater and private water rights,” said Chairman Lummis. “I am pleased that the Forest Service has finally recognized what we’ve known all along: this directive was doomed from the start because of the lack of consultation with the states who have primacy over groundwater. To the contrary, the directive held the potential to erode state water authority and harm local economies. I commend Natural Resources Committee Chairman Rob Bishop for his successful campaign to stop this directive. This is a win for the west, and for any American community home to a National Forest. I encourage Forest Service to stand by its commitment today to go back to the drawing board with the states that should be in the driver’s seat in developing any policy changes when it comes to groundwater.”

“Chief Tidwell, atta boy,” said Vice-Chairman Amodei. “You’re the man. Thank you very much.”

“Attempted water grabs by federal agencies during the Obama Administration have been atrocious,” said Vice-Chairman Gosar. “Whether it is Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS), the Ground Water Service Directive, or the ski area water rights permitting conditions, the federal government has attempted an all-out assault to take control of precious water resources that have traditionally been managed by states or private ownership. While I am pleased to see the U.S. Forest Service back away from its unnecessary and overreaching groundwater directive, I will remain vigilant against any further attempts to override state water laws and extort private water rights.”

“I would like to commend all of those who voiced their concerns over the Forest Service’s Groundwater Directive including my Western Caucus colleagues,” said Chairman Emeritus Pearce. “This directive was unnecessary from the beginning and was introduced without input from states or local communities. While I appreciate the fact that the Forest Service came to this commonsense conclusion, I am dismayed that they plan on issuing a new rule down the road. I recommend the Forest Service focus on effectively managing the resources they currently control and stop trying to federalize state and private water.”

On March 12, House Committee on Natural Resources leadership sent a letter to Forest Service Chief Tidwell, urging the agency to permanently withdraw the proposed directive. Last year, the leadership of the Congressional and Senate Western Caucuses led a bicameral letter to Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack warning that the U.S. Forest Service’s proposed Groundwater Directive would restrict access to public lands and interfere with state and private water rights.

**Brown:** Thank you for that report Jeanne, are there any questions? The South Dakota delegation could not be with us today. Tony this is not part of your responsibility, but do you have any comments that would apply here? If not, we'll move forward with Forest Service (FS) hot topics.

### **Forest Service Hot Topics ~ Craig Bobzien**

**Bobzien:** Thank you Chairman Brown. In addition to our topics today, we'll discuss where our program will be planned for in FY15 - FY19. We received funding for to additional projects. One is the "Two Chiefs" awards; the Chief of the Forest Service and the Chief of Natural Resource Conservation Service put out a challenge through both agencies. The Black Hills received \$800,000 from that for work on the Vestal project. And the NRCS received \$150,000 and those funds along with the \$750,000 in State funding, and several hundred thousand in Wyoming will help strengthen work in all landscapes. In hazardous fuels, we'll do 1,000 acres of treatment, Sunny Side – Storm Atlas, to protect communities, and reduce wildfire risk.

Also from Congress, I e-mailed you that Congress has extended the Secure Rural School Act for another two years; it's likely that the president will sign that. This is important to our Counties in the Black Hills and many of the states in the West.

Our Board does not cover those RACs; we have one for the combined Counties, a lot of that is investing funds back into natural resources. The RAC weighs in on the projects and select those that they think are the best investment.

**Brown:** Thank you for that Supervisor Bobzien. Does anyone have any questions?

**Tysdal:** Is this payment in lieu of taxes?

**Bobzien:** We also have the PILT (Payments In Lieu of Taxes), but there are other programs on the 25% funds, they are related but not exactly the same.

**Brown:** We'll start with the next item, the regular agenda, and I'll turn it back over to Supervisor Bobzien.

**Bobzien:** Before we move on, I would like to add that last week we had Dr. John Freeman on Forest to talk about the Black Hills Forest history; it was a very good talk. We also had Dr. Char Miller one of the most noted professors in the country regarding Forest history. We offered Dr. Freeman's books to any of the Board members that want one. We do have copies if you want to receive one, let Twila know.

### **Regular Agenda**

#### **Election of Vice Chairman**

**Brown:** Thank you, we'll now move to the regular agenda, first thing we need to do is elect a Vice Chairman. Bill Kohlbrand was the Boards Vice Chairman, but with him passing away unexpectedly and tragically, we'll now need to elect his replacement. Thank you Supervisor Bobzien for carrying forward the resolution recognizing Bill's outstanding service to this Board

and the Black Hills. Many of you were able to attend the service many of you were very good and longtime friends of Bill. Part of that tragedy means that we no longer have a Vice Chairman, so at this time I would open the floor for nominations to fill the Vice Chair position. The Vice Chair does everything I do in my absence.

**Whalen:** I would like to make a motion to name Bob Burns as the Vice Chairman for the National Forest Advisory Board. We lobbied him last month, so this shouldn't be a surprise.

**Zimmerman:** I second that motion.

**Brown:** Thank you Jeanne and Mary for that motion and second. Bob Burns has been nominated and the motion has been seconded; are there any other nominations? Seeing none, all in favor of Bob Burns being the Vice Chairman for the National Forest Advisory Board, say aye, opposed say no, motion carried; Bob Burns you are now the Vice Chairman. Bob congratulations, you've been a long time member of this Board, you'll do wonderful in the job.

### **Northern Long Eared Bat Listing Update ~ Kerry Burns**

**Brown:** I'll ask Supervisor Bobzien to introduce the next agenda item.

**Bobzien:** Welcome Kerry Burns, our Forest Wildlife Biologist. We have had several topics on the NLEB and updates, and this is very important, so we've invited Kerry back once again; thank you for coming today Kerry.

**Kerry Burns:** April 2<sup>nd</sup> was the big date we were waiting for the Fish and Wildlife Service decided to list the bat as threatened, with an interim directive under the 4D Rule. Section 4(d) of the Endangered Species Act allows the Fish and Wildlife Service to publish regulations that show what is prohibited and not prohibited.

The interim 4D Rule should be final by the end of the year. Right now they are considering all of the comments given, with the comment period open through July. The proposal did not change significantly from what was proposed in January. We are outside of the White Nose Syndrome area and the buffer zone, so all the actions here in this area regarding incidental take, is not prohibited for all actions. This is a pretty big deal. I don't know how this will play out in the consultation world, but it does mean that with Section 9, one of the things that is prohibited is "take". Purposeful take is prohibited; unless you are taking it from a human structure, but incidental take would not be prohibited. We can talk if you have questions about what the 4D Rule says for those areas with White Nose Syndrome. We are now in the mode of consultation. We have transmitted our Biological Assessment to the Fish and Wildlife Service on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March. Most of our ongoing activities, veg management, mining with plans of operations, special use permits, grazing, travel management, all those ongoing activities we have initiated consultation. They have 90 days to review and provide a draft Biological Opinion. After those 90 days, there are another 45 days that we have time to comment, and then the final; that's the time line.

How will this affect our current activities? We feel we can move forward with our ongoing activities; initiating consultation, we've determined that we will not jeopardize the bat, but we will continue to monitor it. Future – does this mean we'll have more difficulty getting our work done? We'll manage the Forest as we need to but this process is time consuming. It can slow things down if we have reason to go into consultation. It is yet to be seen in the future how much

it will slow us down; especially projects that need to be timely and quick regarding the mountain pine beetle.

**Brown:** Thank you Kerry for that report. Obviously an assessment of what the impact of the report you just provided to us on the letter we submitted expressing various concerns would be useful. Where do we stand in terms of that being responsive? For the general public, who can see the letter, where do we stand do you think? Supervisor Bobzien took it and included it as part of the official comments, how should we feel about where we are regarding impacts?

**Burns:** That letter in response to their comment period for the 4D Rule, and proposal to list it as threatened was received and it is important that it is on file. The Fish and Wildlife Service had so many comments, that they elected to have the interim rule, so they would have time to consider all the comments. Those that have submitted do not need to re-submit; the original comment period on the proposed 4(d) rule ended two weeks prior to the decision date.

**Bobzien:** I believe that the letters add value, plain and simple. They asked for comments, and your thought and consideration that went into the letter is valuable to the process. There were somewhere around 100,000 letters submitted; but that's why Federal Governments ask for comments. I applaud the Board for submitting their advice.

**Brown:** Are there any questions for Kerry?

**Whalen:** In your opinion; if we have a bat fluttering around our barn, and we catch it to have it checked for rabies, will we get in trouble?

**Burns:** There are some real risks in handling the bat safely in the first place, but based on what I know about the 4D Rule, which is purposeful take to remove a bat from an occupied dwelling, you would be within the Rule to remove the bat. The best thing to do would be to call someone to come get the bat out for you rather than transporting the bat.

**Bob Burns:** We heard that this could affect tree harvesting, I try to visualize the bat nesting in a tree, is that a primary place for them to be nesting?

**Kerry Burns:** In the summer time, they use trees and snags, mostly dead trees, under loose bark. They are roosting during the day; females have pups in June and July and they can't fly yet. They could roost in a live tree, if there is a fork in the tree, they could crawl under little spaces. They like tight spaces and there could be bats roosting in in it during the day.

**Tokarczyk:** On the consultation process, since we don't have experience with how that works, Agency to Agency; if it is something that does impact a management practice, how does that process work? After you work with the Fish and Wildlife Service and worked out different areas, what is the notification process?

**Burns:** We do consultation as part of the NEPA process so we'll be consulting with the Fish and Wildlife. To get certain things built in to a project, but after we send it to the F&W the decision maker decides that it should be included.

As an interested party, how would you know how that affects you? There is a mechanism to involve applicants as they are applying for a permit or applying to do something on the Forest, they would get a copy of the assessment and opinion, so that is how some individual person

would be notified.

**Tokarczyk:** What about for existing projects?

**Burns:** We'll put it on our website when consultation is complete. The one we have for ongoing projects is very broad and affects so many people; we will make it available to the public.

**Brown:** Other questions or comments for Kerry? Thank you for that report Kerry.

The National Geographic did a major story on the Mountain Pine Beetle, at the international level. Opposite the story is a list of local workshops that are being done in Custer SD on April 16.

### **Bark Beetle Blues Video ~ Craig Bobzien**

**Bobzien:** Thank you Mr. Chair. The next subject is about much of the work we do on the Forest, we are joining up this video with our 2015 to 2019 action plan - that will be the business side. What this video is about is a different way to tell the story. Often times we'll issue reports, as the Chairman said, we have a national publication telling the story. We have you out telling the story. Custer Arts Council came together and wanted to tell a story; this year they asked me and Cheryl Schreier of Mount Rushmore to come and give a speech. We thought about what another way to communicate with the public would be. Beth Doten and Scott Jacobson worked together on this, talking about our partners, working together; we've been doing this for some years, to help determine where we do projects, where and why.

This was a community event, so we wanted to involve children. We stopped part way through the video and asked the children questions about what they want to see in their Forest in the future? What do you know, what do you admire. We have a spot for discussion, so you'll see that in this video as well.

This is just another venue and another way to connect with communities and public. We would also like your feedback. That's the context, thanks to Beth Doten and Scott Jacobson and all of you to help with the substance of what this is about.

[Showed the Bark Beetle Blues Video]

**Brown:** Thank you Scott and Beth, that was great. As we all know we go through stages of loss when this sort of event takes place, it's a big social and emotional event. The town of Custer responded with this as a positive way to deal. It's an emotional thing when you see trees that you've seen all your life being destroyed.

**Tysdal:** Where are you going to use this?

**Brown:** It was done especially for use in Custer at the Bark Beetle Blue event.

**Bobzien:** We'll use it where there is demand.

**Hague:** Are you going to post it to the website?



**Brown:** Is this property of yours or the Community?

**Jacobson:** It was designed for the MPB event but we plan to use this as needed. Probably won't be posted to a public site because we've used so many pieces from others. It's probably understood best in a venue where we can explain it before we show it.

**Bobzien:** Lauris, what is behind your question? As I said when I started this, we communicate about this, I look to Nancy on the Conservation Leader Group on how we tell our story. Different people obtain their information in different ways. Dick said that there was something about the community that was able to connect. We'll still post reports to websites, we'll have news media like today, and how you communicate and feedback. Is it useful to use a format like this?

**Brown:** In the Custer setting, it's part of a major community event, it starts at the high school, there were dancers, a band, etc.; 300-400 people, then they marched to the community park where they built a beetle, and they started the beetle on fire. The fire department shoots fireworks. The underlying theme is the emotional impact that this has on our communities, this afternoon we'll talk about fires. There's one thing to see a fire, but then to see what is no longer there, that is hard. It was very well done and very well received.

**Tysdal:** Mr. Chairman, I would agree, it was well done, thank you.

**Brown:** We'll take a brief break 2:10, start again at 2:20.

### **FY 15-19 Vegetation Management Strategy (Follow-Up) ~ Dave Mertz**

**Brown:** Before we get started, Nancy Trautman has a comment

**Trautman:** I would just like to say, about the Bark Beetle Blue video, as I visit with others, one of the things that might be a good idea, because it was done so well, and differently than our normal message, it would be good to show it to our legislators. In Pierre there was some concern about whether or not the MPB was even still an issue. I think that with our local group and our conservation group I will ask that we have an event where we'll show this video so that it makes an impact, rather than loading them up with all the information in November when they are getting ready to go.

**Brown:** Thank you for that Nancy, with that we'll turn it back over to Craig.

**Bobzien:** Our next topic will be our 2015- 2019 Veg Management Plan; results in timber sales, prescribed fire, small sales, habitat improvement, projects of that nature, all woven into these plans.

I want to express my pride about everyone stepping up on the All Lands Strategy, centered around MPB, but a lot of thought being put into fuels, forest diversity, wildlife, etc. as well. We asked the Advisory Board to give us advice. A subset of our Advisory Board also works with the Conservation Leaders, to look at what's been done, what our project planning is, the best methods, the best time we can be, in this case over the next five years. This year's plan is pretty much latched in. We have some specific plans for FY16, but more flexibility in the future years.

Dave will go over the changes, but I ask that the Board and Forest Service are both present at future meetings, especially when final recommendations are made. This will help with some of the questions about what can and cannot be done.

[Review of the Timber Sale map]

My job is to look at the whole spectrum; we had a lot of activity in other areas including on the State line. In short, Dave will respond to the Boards advice; we weighed a number of suggestions, but in the end, we did not pull everyone (loggers) out and up to Lawrence County. We did move the concentration to Lawrence County. The input is valued, and we acted on as many areas as possible.

If there is any talk out there about why we didn't move everything to the north, I'll take the responsibility for that.

**Dave Mertz:** Good afternoon. Craig did a good job of setting the stage for what I want to talk about. I've passed out copies of the Five Year Plan and the FY 15 plan. Things are moving along pretty well this year, we are confident that we'll get the work done this year that we have planned to do. One big change this year was the Limestone Project which is in the Northern part of the Forest. We worked with the State of South Dakota, as well as Lawrence County. That was not a project that we started out the year with, but we came together to make it work and now that project is almost logged out and close to being done.

We did get the recommendations from the Working Group, there were 30 or so of those. There was a Sub Group; the Sub Group will be doing an after action review of the event and how we can make it better. There were some recommendations that the Forest Service could have helped add input. In the first year we can't make very many changes; year two, January/February we already have a lot of work underway.

A lot of times we don't have a lot of flexibility on year two. Year three, we probably have more room to maneuver there. Same with year four, but if you look at year five, there are so many changes that occur – making plans for five years out, you can make all kinds of plans, but then life happens. So the energy spent to recommend five years out is probably not a great place to spend your energy.

We did get recommendations from the Working Group; we responded to those in writing, and we met with a small group and went thru all those recommendation, and we did make some changes where we felt we could, but there were a lot of recommendation that we were not able to implement. There was a real interest in putting effort in the northern hills, we did do some of that but not as much as they would have liked. There are other considerations for these treatments too that Rangers have to take into account. So we can get ahead of the bugs so there aren't a lot of dead trees where people live and work.

Both of these documents say draft, because they get tweaked all the time. The Forest Leadership Team approved the changes to the Five Year Plan, and that is what is shown on the spreadsheet. We make adjustments here and there as things change.

The volume: We received additional funding, and our total program to fund our regular timber sale program is \$9.6 million. That equates to 200,800 CCF program (100 million board feet), which is a pretty aggressive program.

Out year volume: We plan for a 180 ccf program, because we never know how we'll end up on funding; we use a number we base off and 180 is where we try to plan, this year we 20 ccf over.

**Brown:** In our minutes we'll have copies of what you handed out, but for now can you tell us what some of these abbreviations are?

**Mertz:** POL stands for products other than lumber. We sell trees in two classifications, saw timber, and POL; sawtimber is greater than nine inches, and POL is less than nine inches. That material (POL) is used for chipping, fence posts, etc.

**Brown:** How do we communicate this to the general public?

**Bobzien:** We could link some of this, with additional interpretation so it does tell a story, to our external website.

**Tysdal:** How do you know where to find these sales without going into the Ranger District Office? Like in Hells Canyon, and Briggs, Two Gun?

**Mertz:** You just have to tie it with the map.

**Tysdal:** If I look these up, will they show me where the beetles are?

**Mertz:** We're not doing a lot of work in the center of the Forest, because we've already logged it or it is already dead, so our strategy is to move out to the edge. If you look at the map it shows sales that have been completed, and it will show a location for a given sale, so then you go down to the unit level for more specific information.

**Tysdal:** In that Working Group, did you discuss starting on the outside and working in?

**Mertz:** We certainly had those discussions, and there are different opinions and approaches among different people that could be valid. We took the approach of not doing clean up where the bugs have already been, but to get where the bugs haven't been and work our way out.

**Burns:** I was in a meeting the other day, and a person asked about Steamboat Timber Sale. She was very angry that it hadn't been started. The answer was they are moving things around. When they did the Black Hawk Timber Sale near where I live, we got info on how it was going, progress reports, etc.

**Mertz:** The notification process takes place when we do the NEPA for the sales; that is the comment period. We try to make people aware of where a project is taking place, and ask for comments. Down the road when we are putting a timber sale in place, an individual would have to express that they want to be involved and notified. They'll also start seeing that someone has been marking trees in their area, so if they have concerns, they should talk to the Ranger District.

**Burns:** How do I get on the list to get to name the timber sales?

**Mertz:** There are a few privileges that a forester gets to do. They pick a theme. There have been so many sales over the years, if you use a place or a peak or something, those have all been used up, so that you don't name it the same as 15 years ago; they go with a different theme.

**Hinkhouse:** Could the maps be sent to Board in a PDF format?

**Bobzien:** The challenging part of the work is when there is thousands of acres and then we have to think about where our best 30,000 acres are every year. We are committed to continue to ask our partners and we have to own where we are going.

### **Bearlodge Project Presentation of DEIS Alternatives ~ Steve Kozel & Jeanette Timm**

**Brown:** I'll turn it over to Forest Supervisor Craig Bobzien to introduce the next topic.

**Bobzien:** Bearlodge District Ranger Steve Kozel and Bear Lodge Project Manager Jeanette Timm will give an update on where we are at on the process with the Bear Lodge project.

**Kozel:** We have an overview that we will present of the project describing the significance of project and what's in the future. As Craig mentioned, it is a very important project from a local, regional and national perspective. We have a lot of interest from all the government entities. It's a very complex project and there are a lot of stakeholders and jurisdictions including local and state that have different permitting authorities. There are 6 cooperators that I'd like to recognize. They have been outstanding to work with and have been a very valuable asset to us as we are moving through the environmental process. We want to give recognition to Rare Element Resources. They respond and give us information in a timely manner and they have been very diligent. Everyone is working together and it's been a good project to work on. I'll turn it over to Jeanette and then we will take some questions.

### **PowerPoint: Bear Lodge Project ~ Jeanette Timm**

#### History of the Project Area

- First discovered in 1949 on the Bear Lodge Mountains
- 50 years of exploration
- 2004 – Paso Rico – (Rare Element Resources) begins small exploration program
- 12 drill holes = 13,319 feet of core samples
- 2009 – exploration moves into development program
- 297 drill holes = 213,563 feet of core samples
- May 2012 – Plan of Operations
- May 2013 – FS accepts the Plan of Operation
- Dec 2013 – selection of third party contractor, Tetra Tech, for Environmental Impact Statement

#### EIS Process

- Feb 2014 – Cooperating Agencies MOUs (6)
  - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
  - U.S. National Park Service
  - State of Wyoming
  - Crook and Weston Counties
  - Crook County Natural Resource District
- April 2014 – Scoping
  - Federal Register NOI – March 28, 2014

- Public Mailings – March 21, 2014 – 176 contacts; electronic and hard copy
- Open Houses – Sundance (142 attendees) and Upton (139 attendees)
- Spearfish/Rapid City (50 attendees)

#### Scoping Comments

- 154 letters received
- Public Scoping Summary Report
  - [www.tinyurl.com/BearlodgeMineProject](http://www.tinyurl.com/BearlodgeMineProject)
  - Resources of Concern
    - Roads, air, economy, grazing, heritage, visual, noise, private property, public health, reclamation, recreation, soil, seismic, land use, water, weeds, fire, wildlife, fish, and botany
  - Recommend Alternatives
    - Roads, reclamation, waste rock facility, physical upgrade plant

#### Alternative Issues

- Water – Surface and Groundwater
- Cultural Resources
- Public Safety
- Current and Future Land Uses, and Socioeconomic Consequences

#### Alternatives

- No Action Alternative - Required
- Feb 2014 Plan of Operation
- Modified Feb 2014 Plan of Operation
- 4 additional alternatives to address:
  - potential risks to known water and cultural resources
  - potential impacts on current NF land uses
  - risks to public safety

#### What's Next?

- Completing the Analysis
- Preparing for the Public Distribution of DEIS
  - Federal Register NOI – Sept 4, 2015
  - DEIS available for Public – Sept 4, 2015
  - Public Open Houses – late Sept/early Oct
- Public Comments on DEIS – 45 days
  - FS Review public comments
  - Modification of DEIS
- Final EIS and Draft Record of Decision – Mar 3, 2016
- Objection Period – 45 days
- Final Record of Decision – Aug 8, 2016

**Brown:** Is this project mostly Wyoming geography specific for public input or will you be getting public input from other areas?

**Timm:** Typically we tend to stay in our local communities, but I haven't heard the ruling out of Rapid City.

**Kozel:** We will tie into our local communities. We especially want to work closely with Sundance & Upton, WY. In terms of additional public venues, we will evaluate to see how much public interest and attendance there is.

**Zimmerman:** I'm wondering if you could cover this resource again in the context of its availability globally and how we need it for defense. What control do you have over where the resource goes, who does it go to and how is that determined?

**Kozel:** Linda (Tokarczyk) in terms of global availability can maybe discuss this.

**Tokarczyk:** Currently we have 85% of rare earth elements coming from China and almost 100% of the "critical" rare earth elements that are specifically found in the Rare Element Resources' project area come from China. There is only one other operating mine in North America and that is Molycorp. They do not have a lot of the heavy rare earth elements. Our company is trying hard to have a composite of all of the rare earth elements and then be able to separate them out by developing proprietary processes. We are hoping to do this in the region as currently this capability [separation] isn't accessible in the U.S.

**Zimmerman:** Could you sell the elements to China? Is there a process where the elements would stay here?

**Tokarczyk:** There is a domestic demand for it. I can't say it will all go to the places where there are those uses. Some end uses may end up overseas, but we are hoping to have some domestic use.

**Kozel:** Our responsibility is to analyze the effects on the environment and making sure there is compliance. As far as what is chosen to do with the elements, that is up to the company. They are trying to work on the separation of the rare earths right now.

**Tokarczyk:** We are part of the Critical Materials Institute and their efforts. We are also making connections for domestic use. I want to commend Steve and Jeanette; they have been great to work with and the [updated] timeline has been helpful.

**Kozel:** We do have a poster that you can look at for more information.

**Brown:** We need to move to our next topic and I'll turn it over to Deputy Forest Supervisor Jerry Krueger to introduce the next topic.

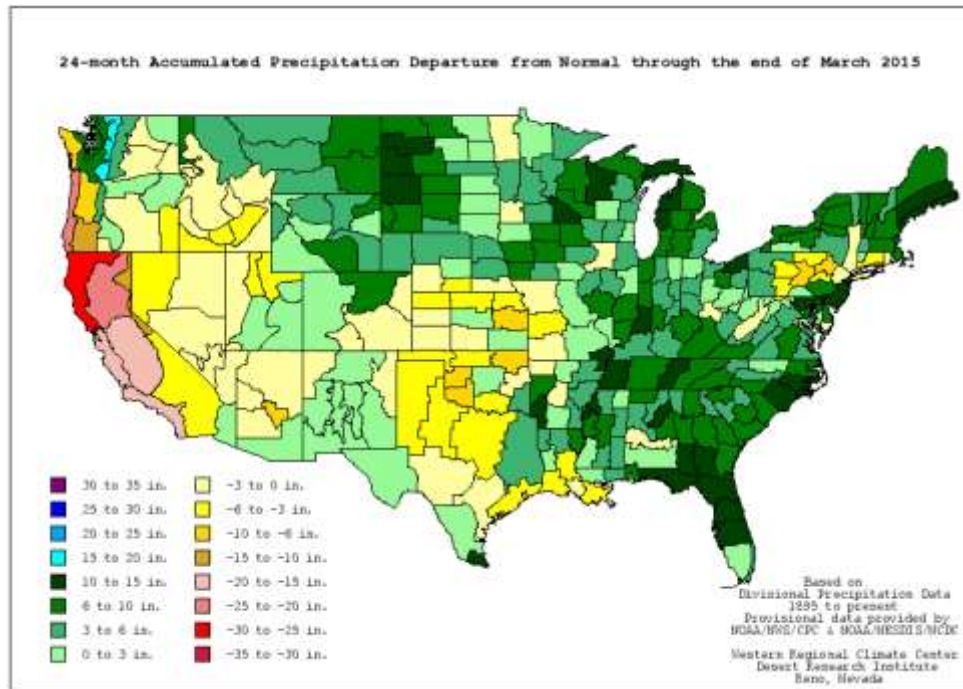
### **2015 Fire Season Outlook ~ Darren Clabo**

**Krueger:** Thanks. We are going to move into the latter part of our agenda today. The first speaker is Darren Clabo. I read his e-mails with extreme attention. He publishes the weather forecast for fire and that's been on everyone's minds. Early season fire behavior is extremely important. We are going to follow with presentations from Jason, Josh and Jay. We look forward to hearing your presentations.

**PowerPoint:** 2015 South Dakota Wildfire Potential Outlook ~ Darren R. Clabo, SD State Fire Meteorologist

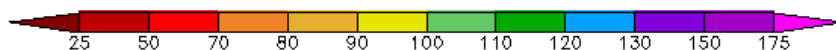
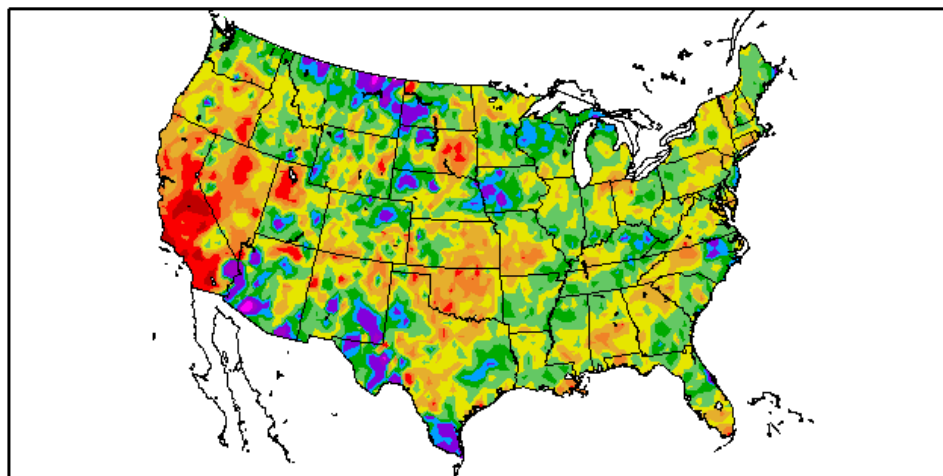
Where are we now?

- Past 24 Months



- Past 12 Months

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)  
4/14/2014 – 4/13/2015

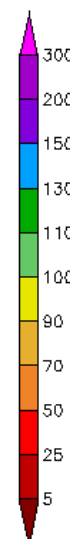
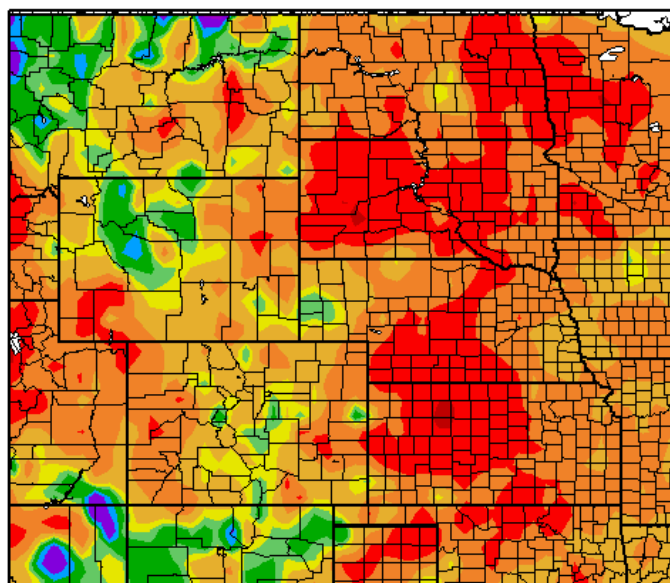


Generated 4/14/2015 at HPRCC using provisional data.

Regional Climate Centers

- Past 6 Months

Percent of Normal Precipitation (%)  
10/14/2014 – 4/13/2015



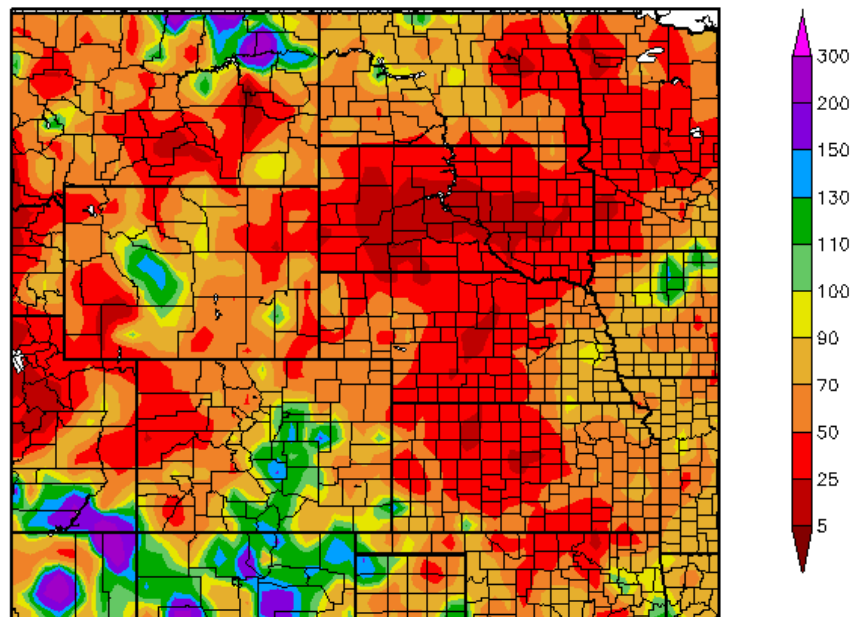
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Regional Climate Centers

- Past 3 Months



# Percent of Normal Precipitation (%) 1/14/2015 – 4/13/2015

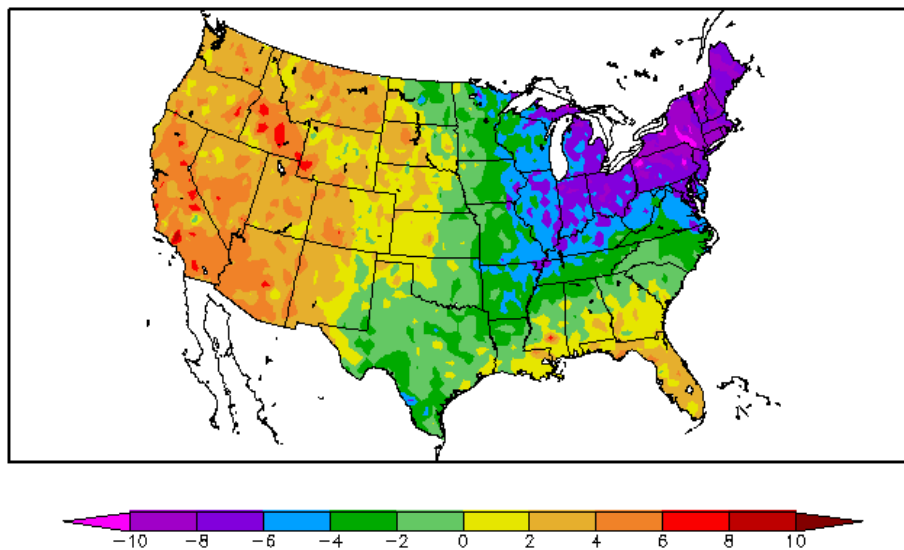


Generated 4/14/2015 at HPRCC using provisional data.

Regional Climate Centers

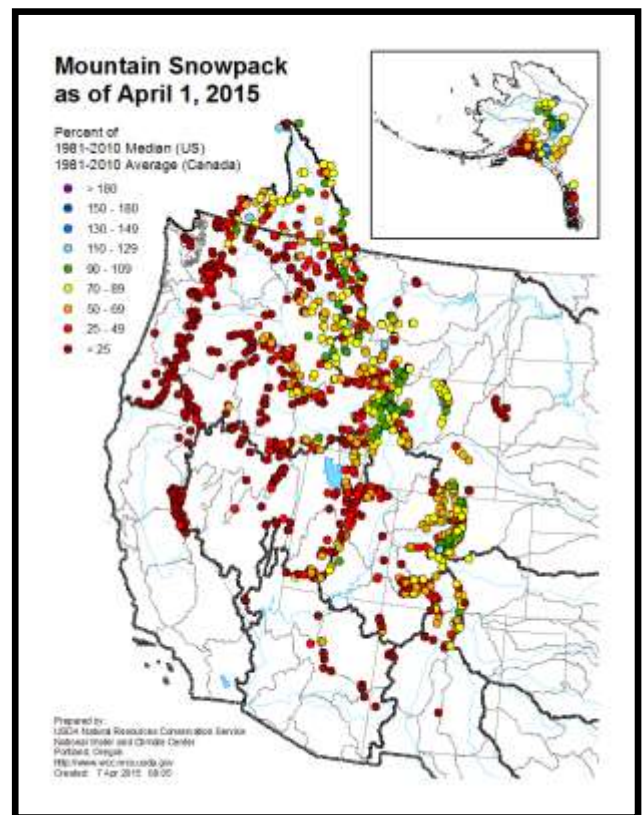
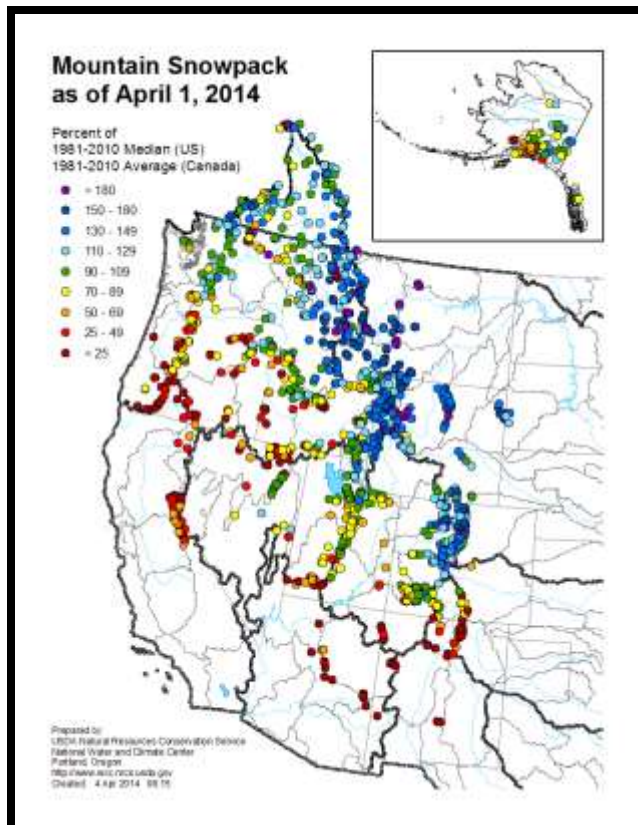
- Past 60 Days

# Departure from Normal Temperature (F) 2/13/2015 – 4/13/2015



Generated 4/14/2015 at HPRCC using provisional data.

Regional Climate Centers



## Snow Water Equivalent

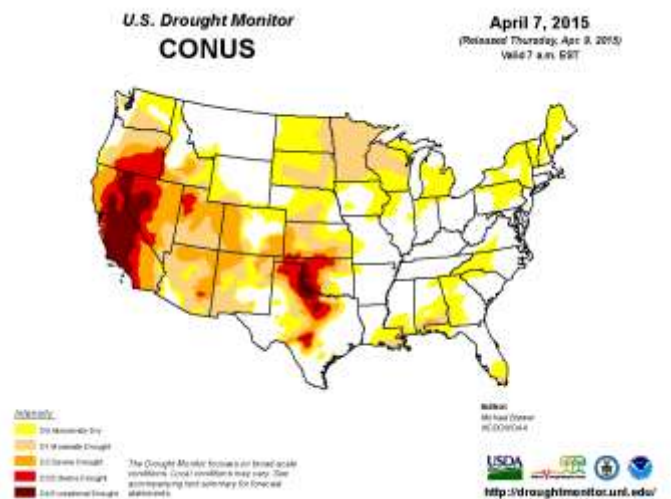
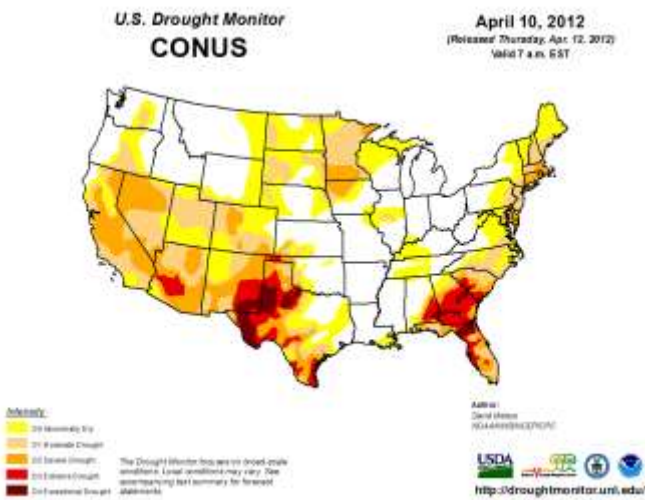
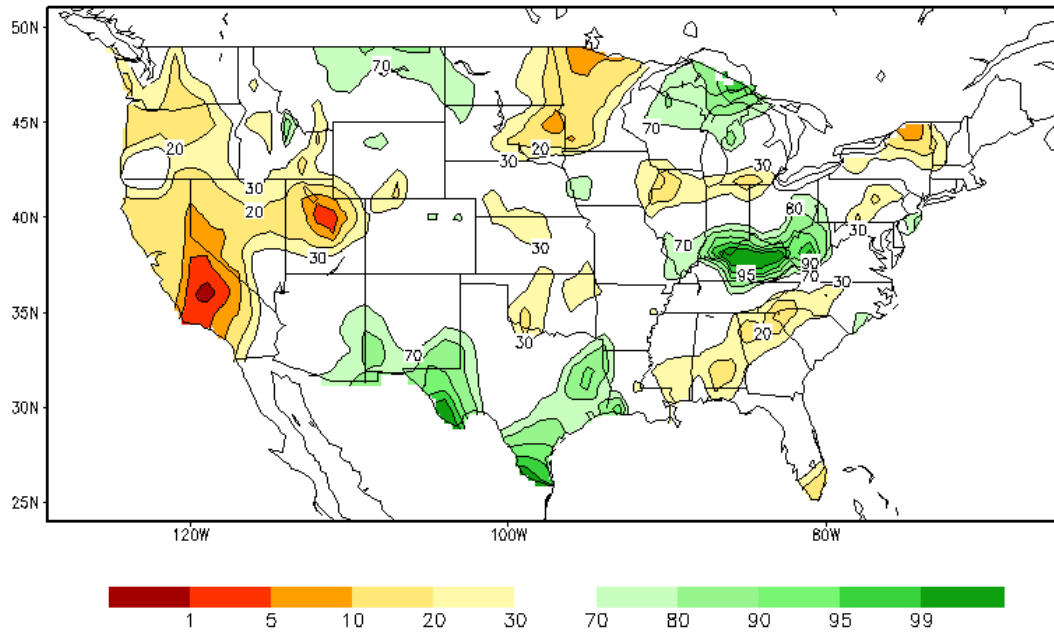
### BLACK HILLS SNOW COURSE READINGS

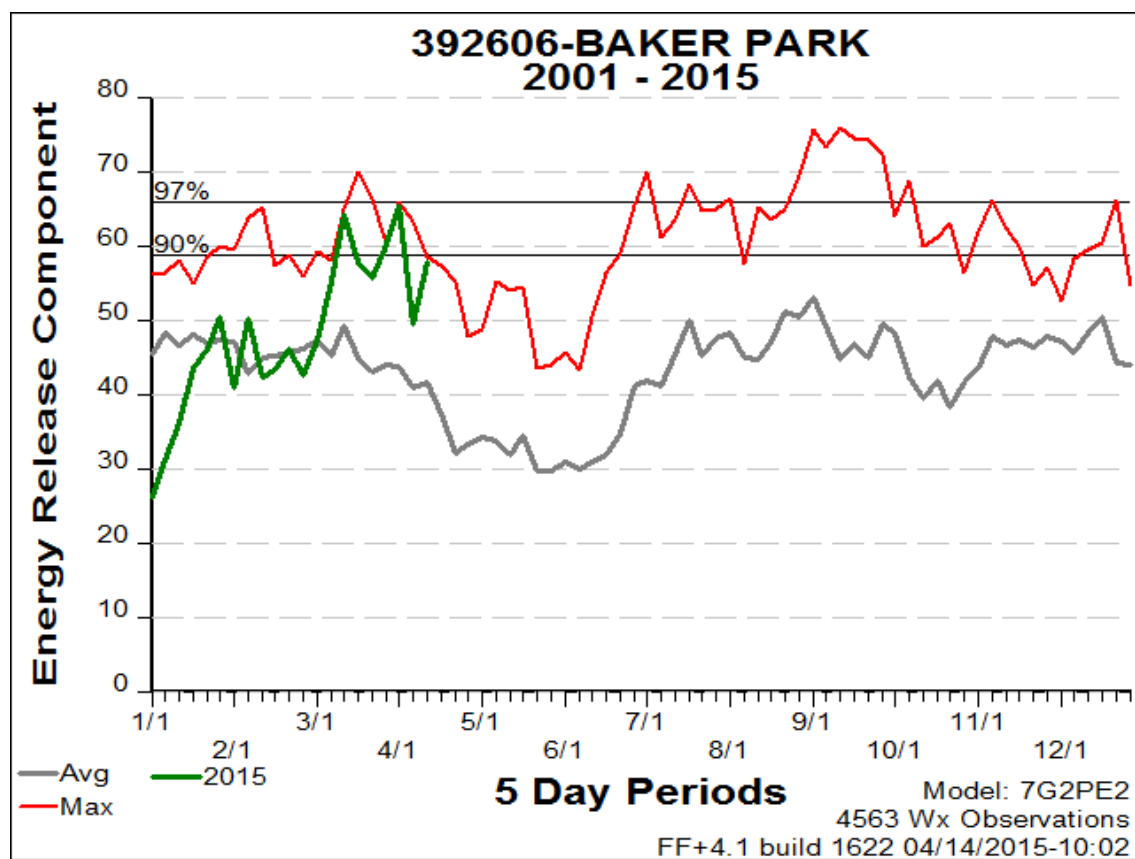
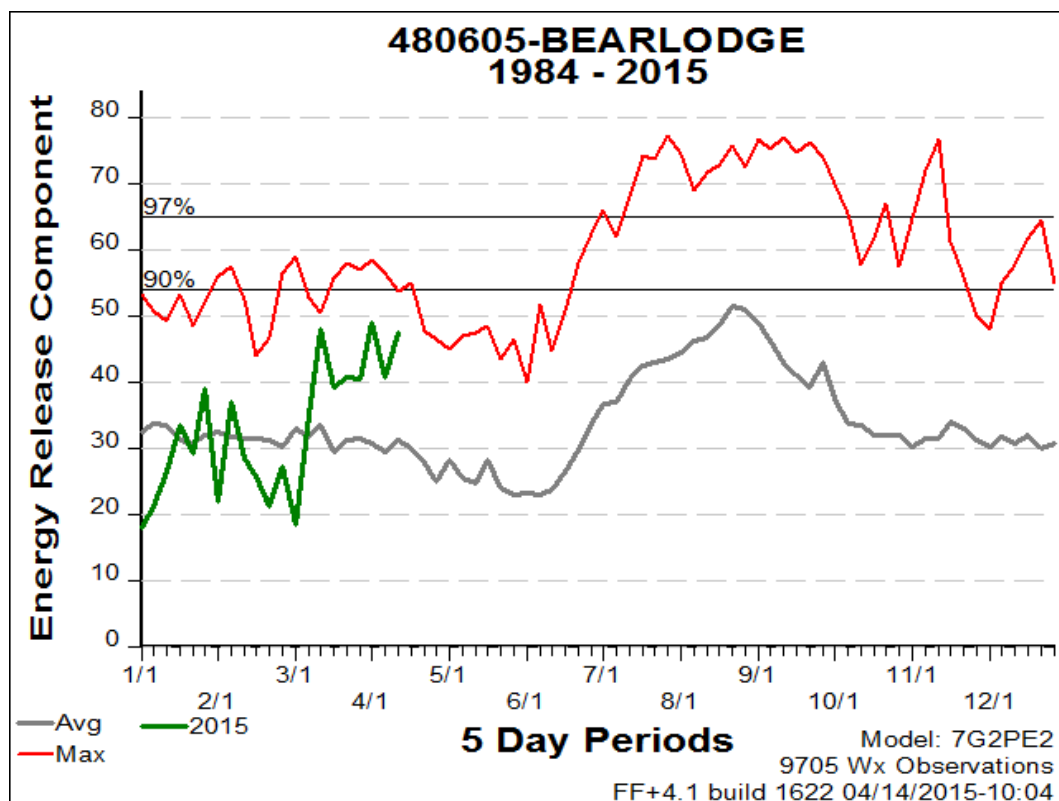
*April 1, 2015*

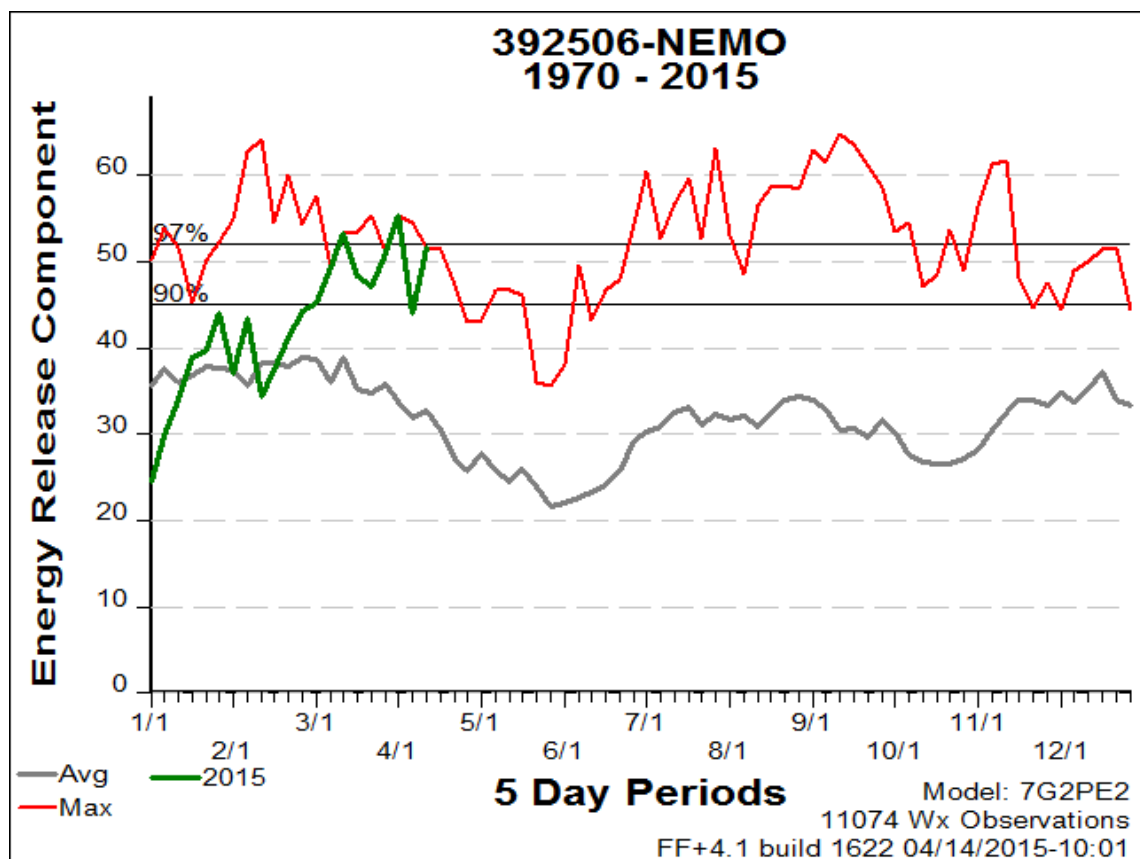
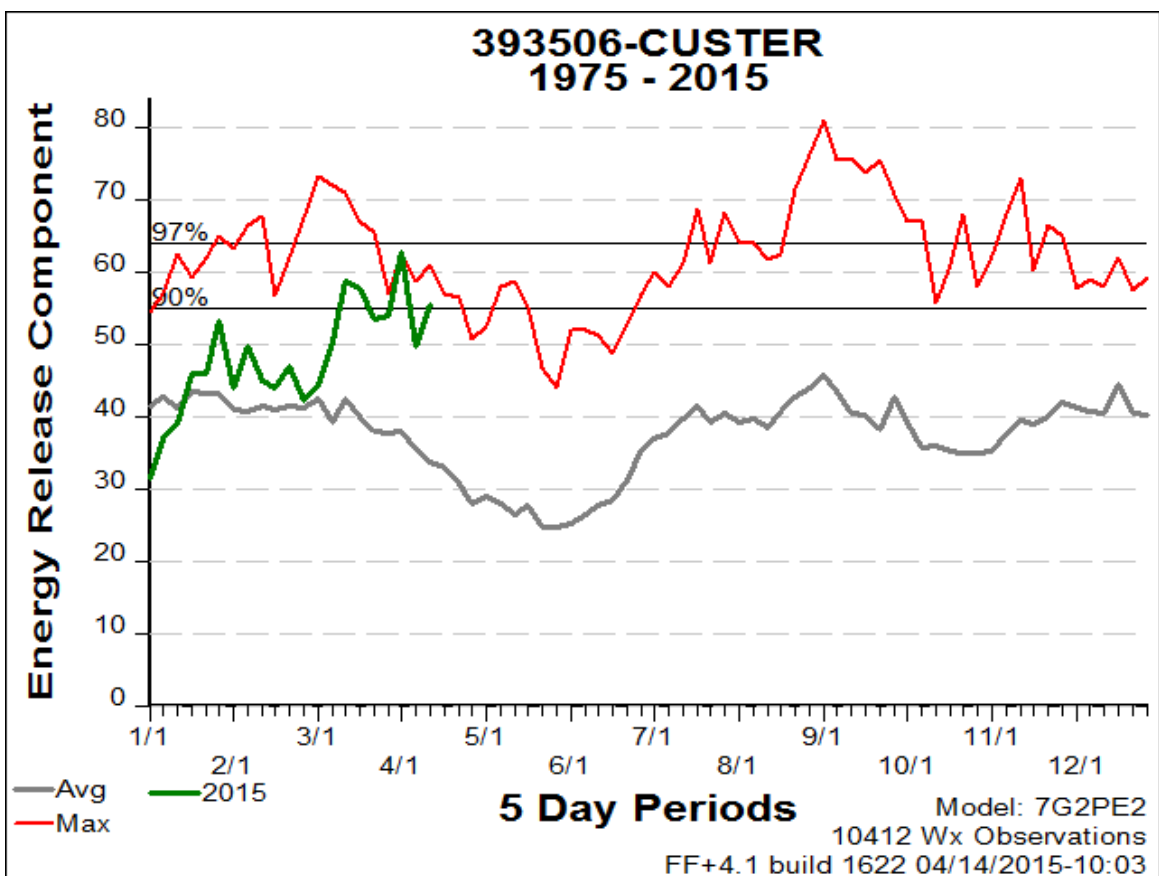
Site Name	Elevation (ft)	Current Snow Depth (in)	Current SWE (in)	30 Year Average SWE (in)	Last Year's SWE (in)	Current Percent of 30 Year Average SWE (%)
Bear Lodge Divide	4680	0.0	0.0	1.3	3.2	0
Blind Park	6870	0.0	0.0	8.7	9.0	0
Cole Canyon	5870	0.0	0.0	6.9	7.9	0
Ditch Creek	6880	0.0	0.0	4.1	4.6	0
Little Bear Run	6240	0.0	0.0	2.4	5.5	0
Mallo	6420	0.0	0.0	6.5	8.8	0
Mount Tom	5560	0.0	0.0	3.8	5.0	0
North Rapid Creek	6250	4.0	1.3	8.3	9.2	16
Reuter Canyon	6280	1.5	0.3	8.6	11.7	3
Upper Spearfish	6500	8.9	3.1	6.2	11.5	50

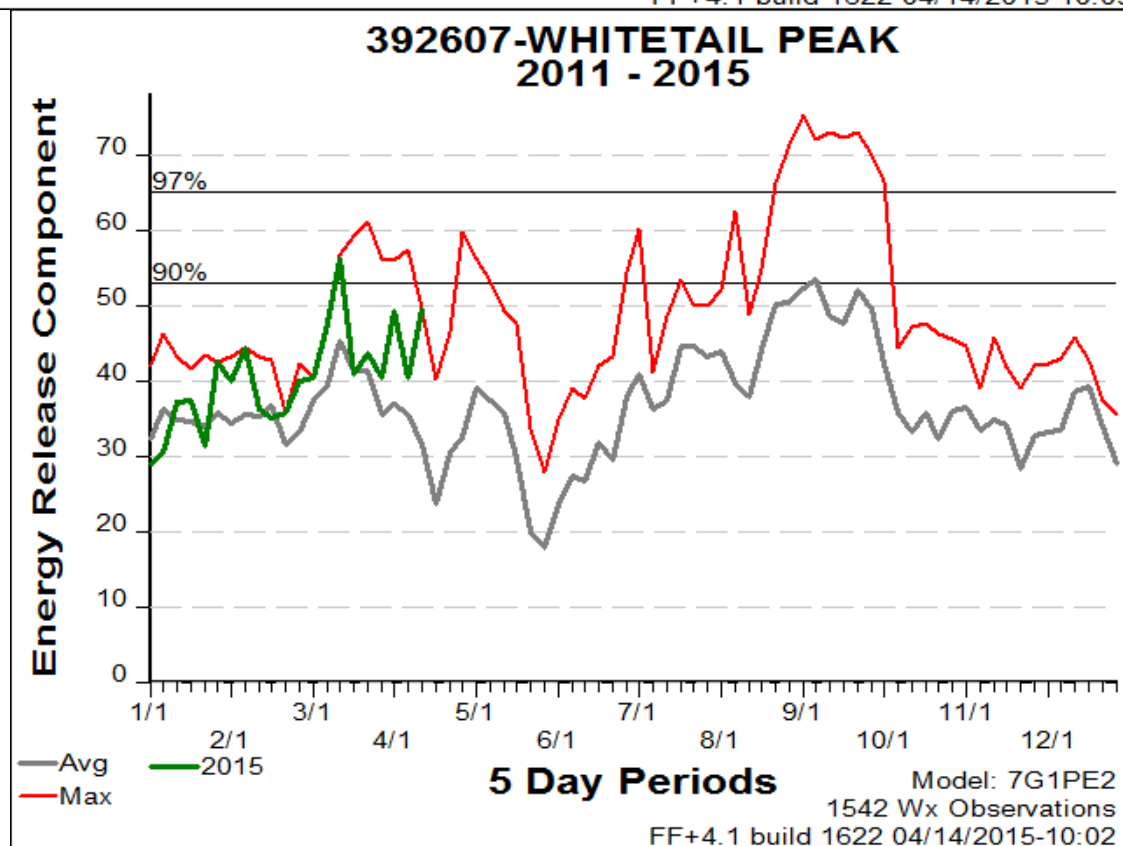
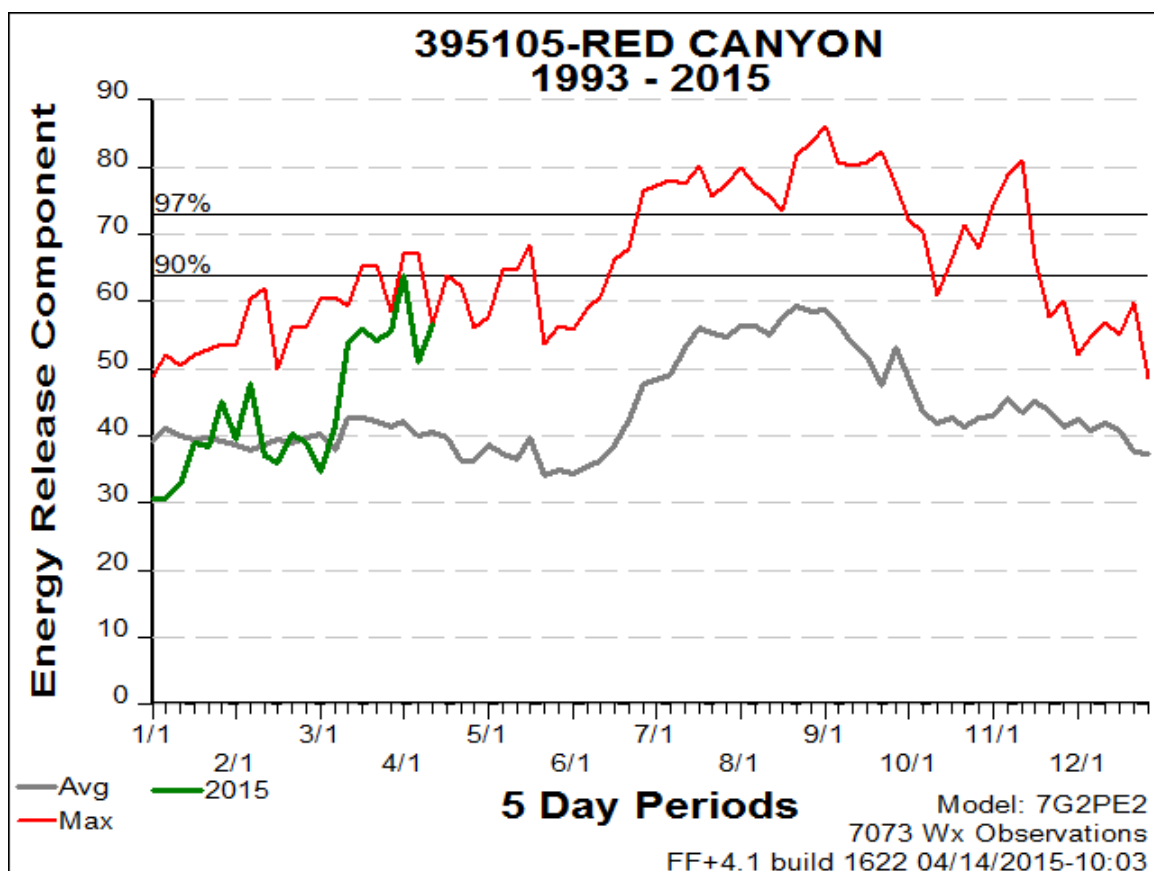
SWE = Snow Water Equivalent

# Calculated Soil Moisture Ranking Percentile APR 13, 2015





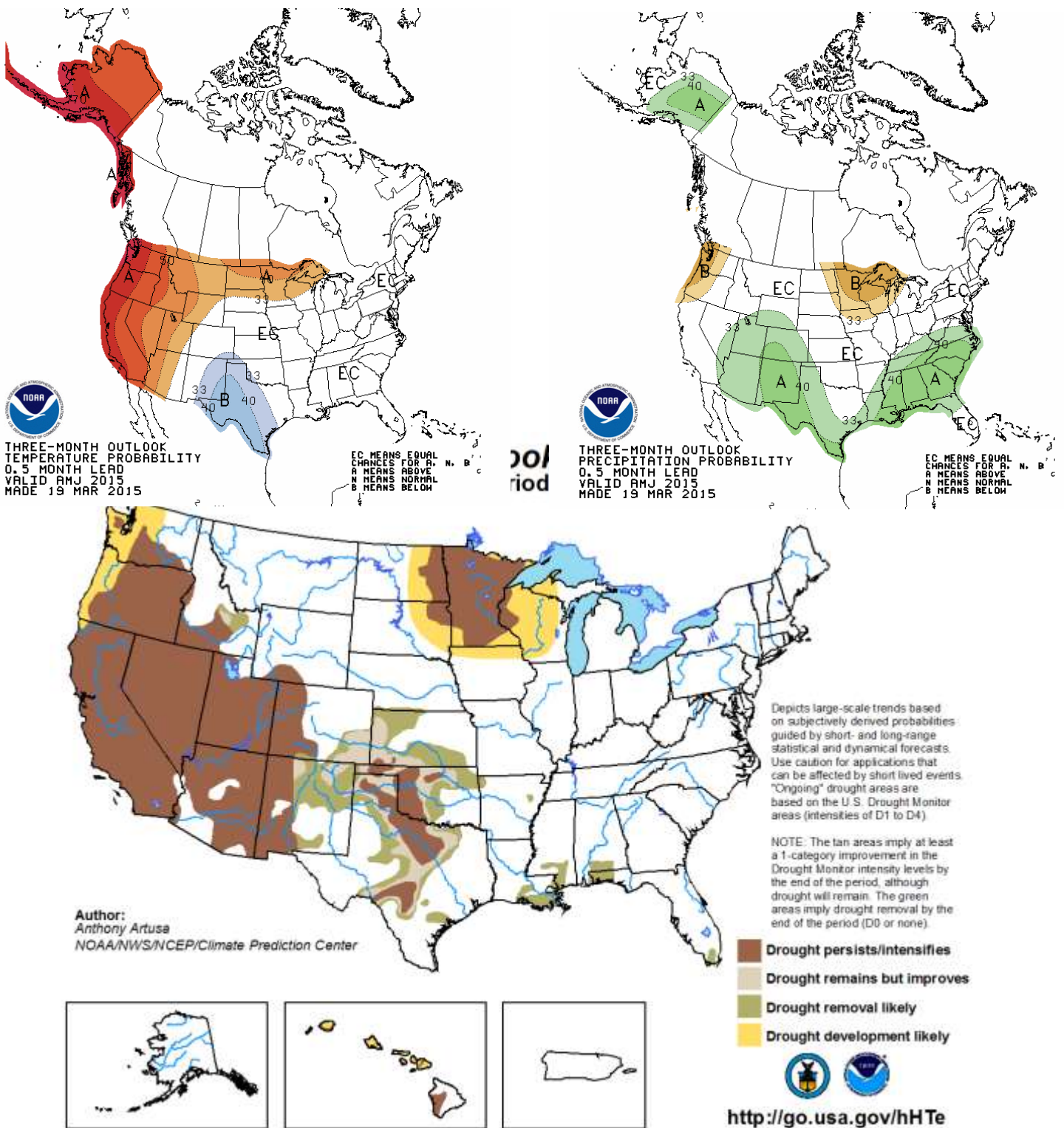


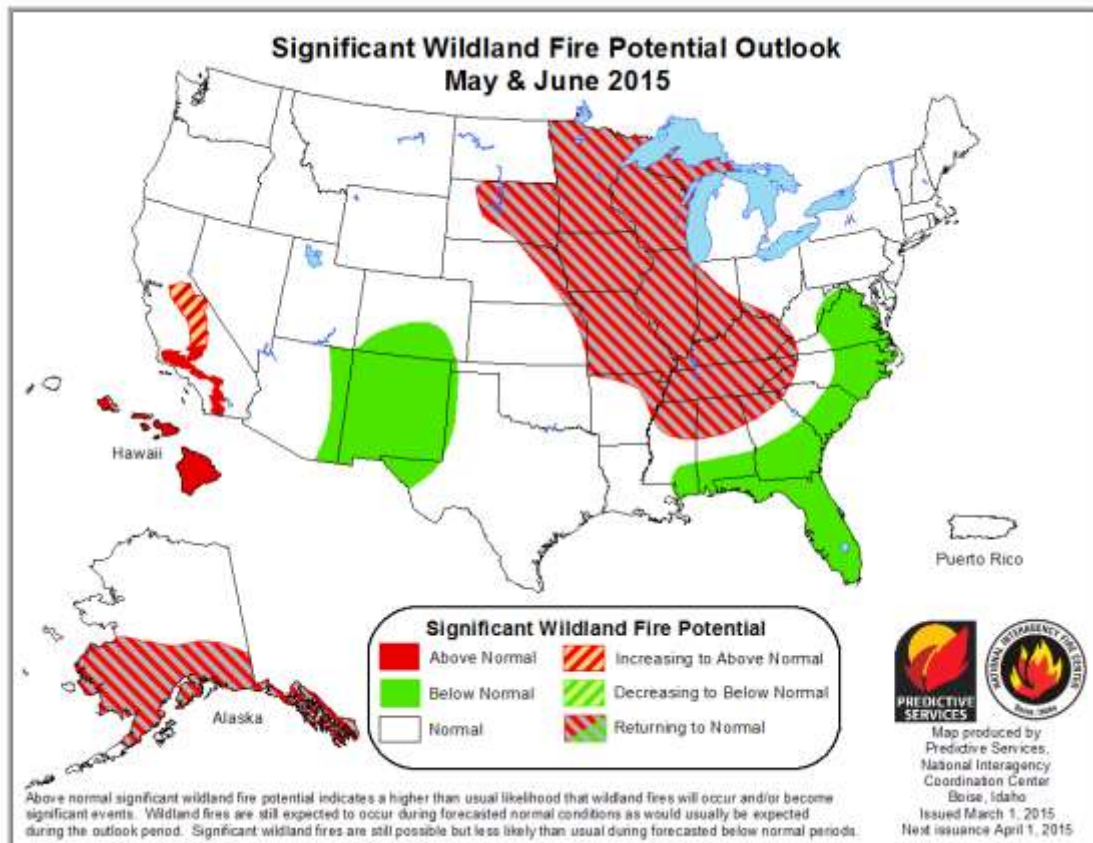
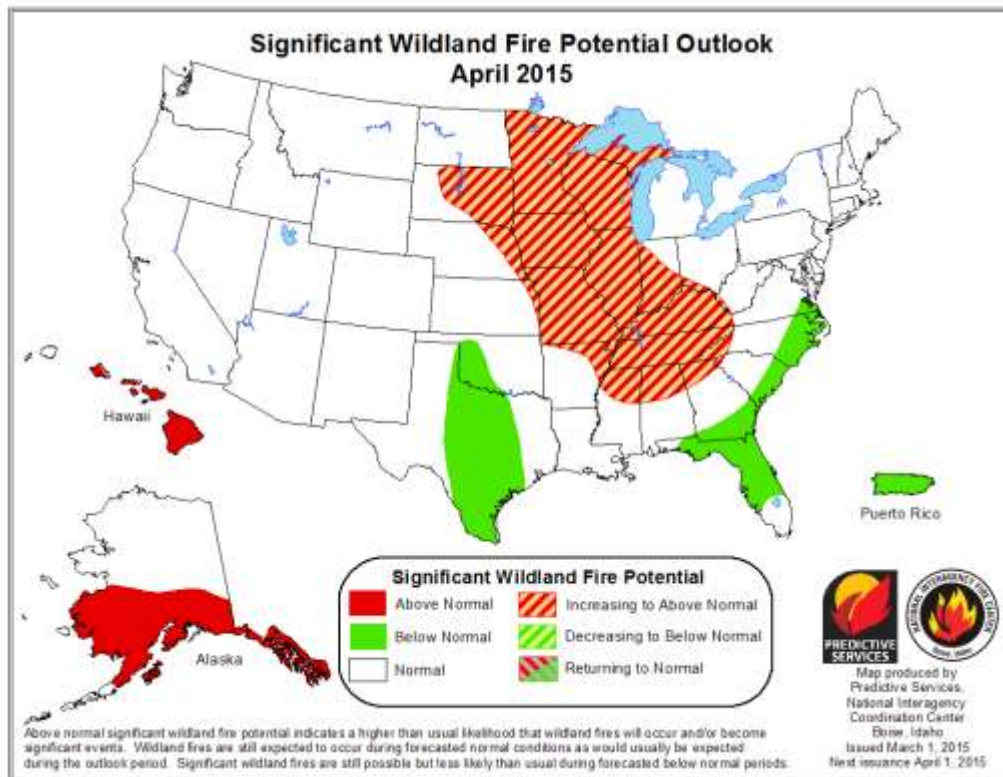




# Weather/Drought Outlook - Late Spring/Early Summer

## April/May/June Outlook







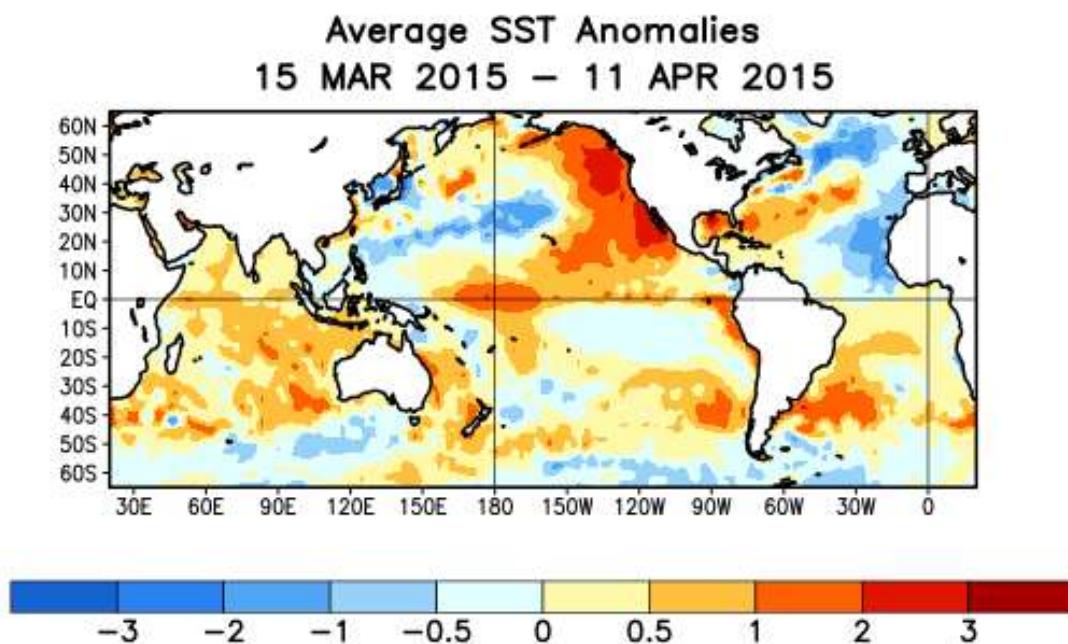
## Weather/Drought Outlook – Summer

### NMME Projections

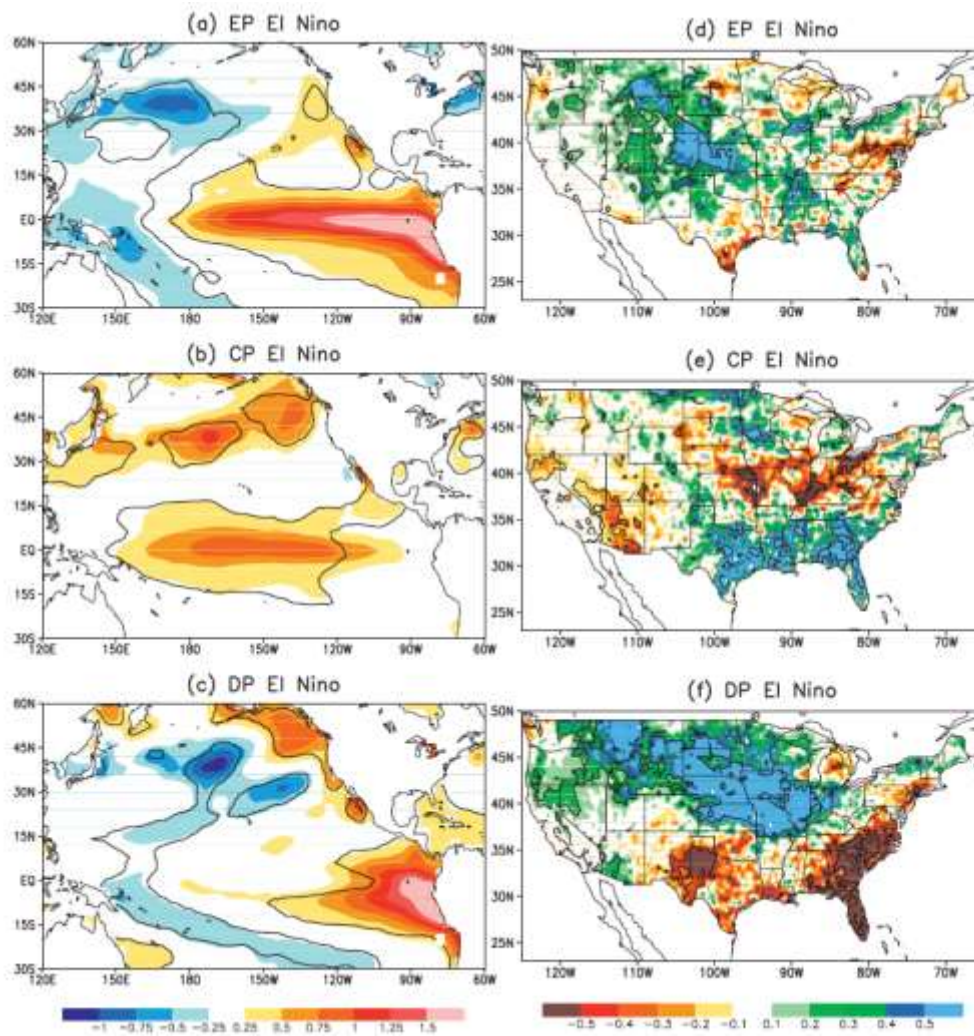
- North American Multi-Model Ensemble
  - Long range NMME projection showing average to wetter than average May-August
  - Also showed wetter than average January – April
    - Obviously didn't happen
  - Recent skill scores have been very poor

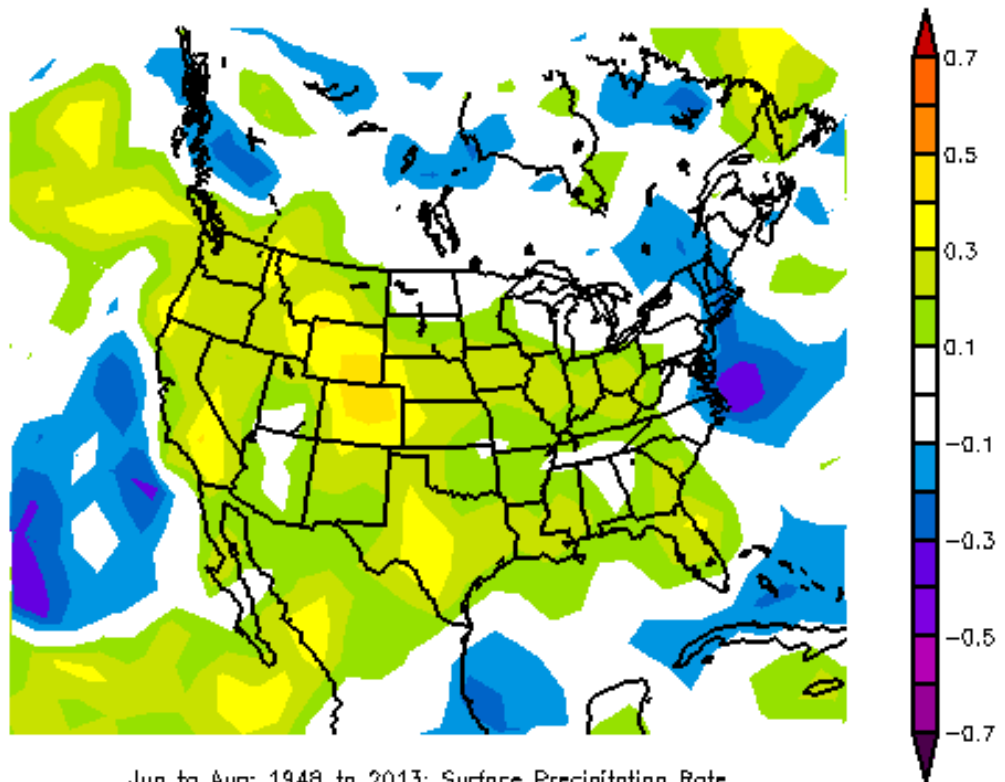
### El Nino Activity

- **El Nino** conditions are present across equatorial Pacific Ocean
  - Typically, El Nino brings wetter than average conditions to the Rockies/Northern Great Plain during the summer
  - This is a very *atypical* El Nino
    - Climate Prediction Center is still hedging bets towards wet conditions... not sure about this
    - Will need to monitor!
- Warm Phase PDO



JJA Precip. - Wang et al. 2012

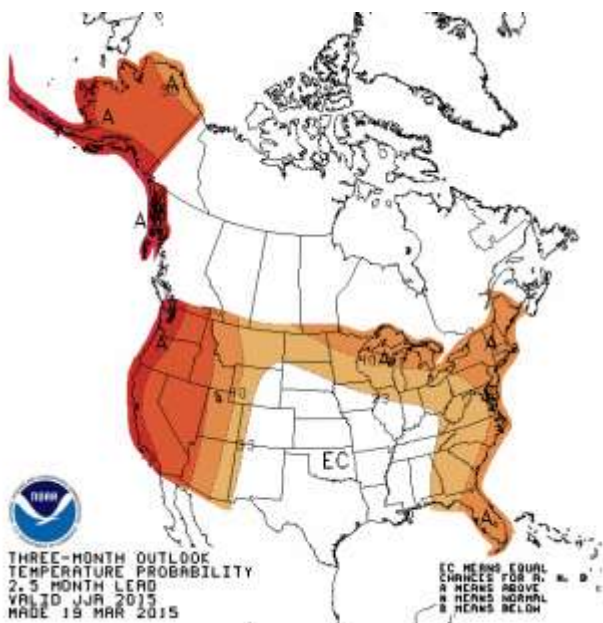




Jun to Aug: 1948 to 2013: Surface Precipitation Rate  
Seasonal Correlation w/ Jun to Aug PDO  
NCEP/NCAR Reanalysis

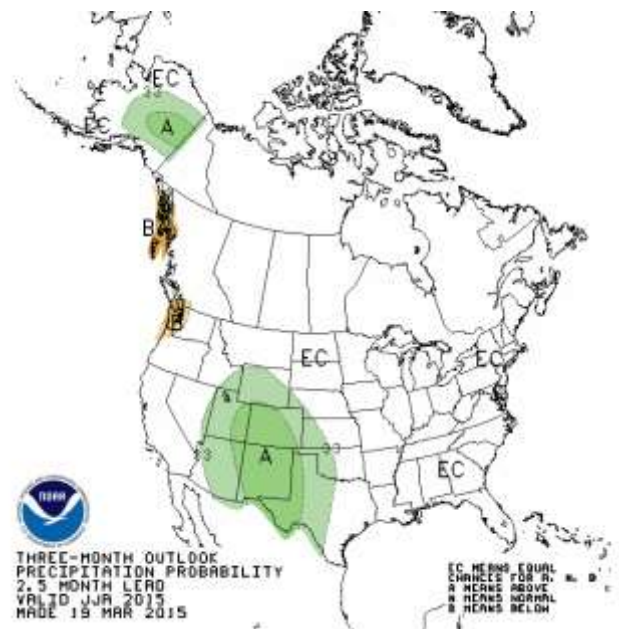
NOAA/ESRL Physical Sciences Division

## June/July/Aug. Outlook



### South Dakota Outlook Summary

- Things to consider



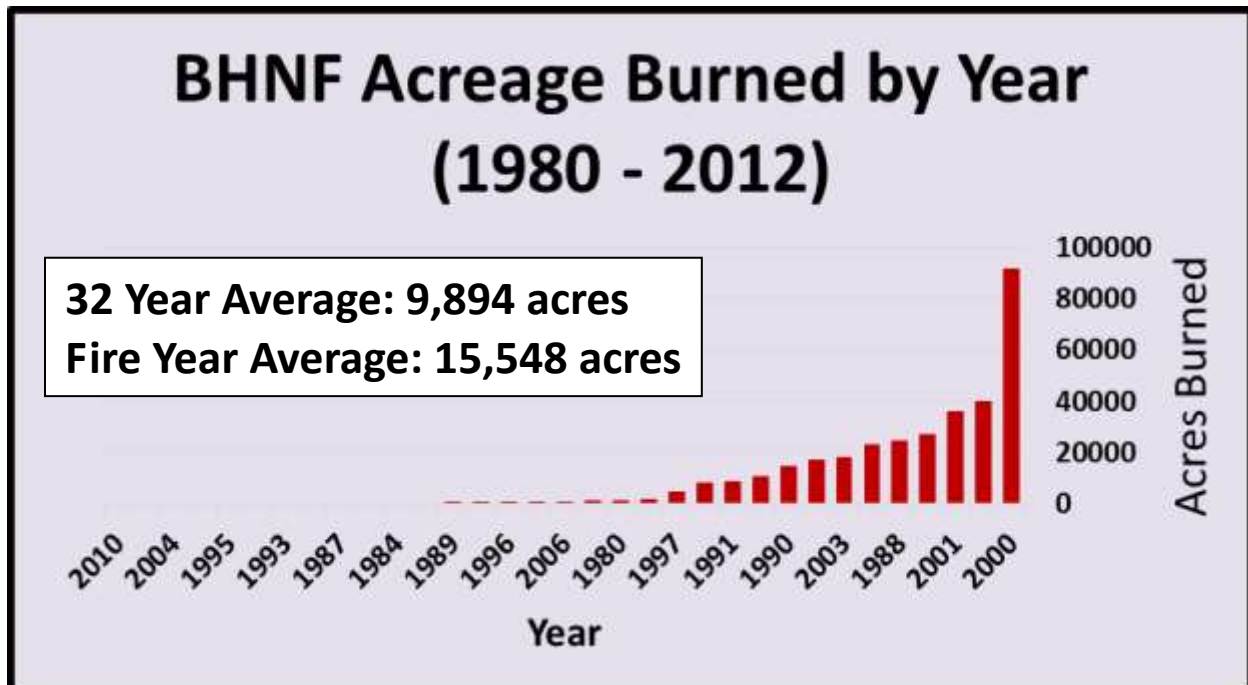
- Healthy fine fuel loads
  - Two previous years of very wet conditions- lots of grass
  - Fine fuels are the carrier of the fire on the surface
  - Fire activity was high in March/April
    - Available fuels burned well!
- Deficient winter moisture
  - Has led to short-term drought
  - However, spring is expected to bring average rains with an average temperature/precipitation summer.

#### South Dakota Outlook Summary

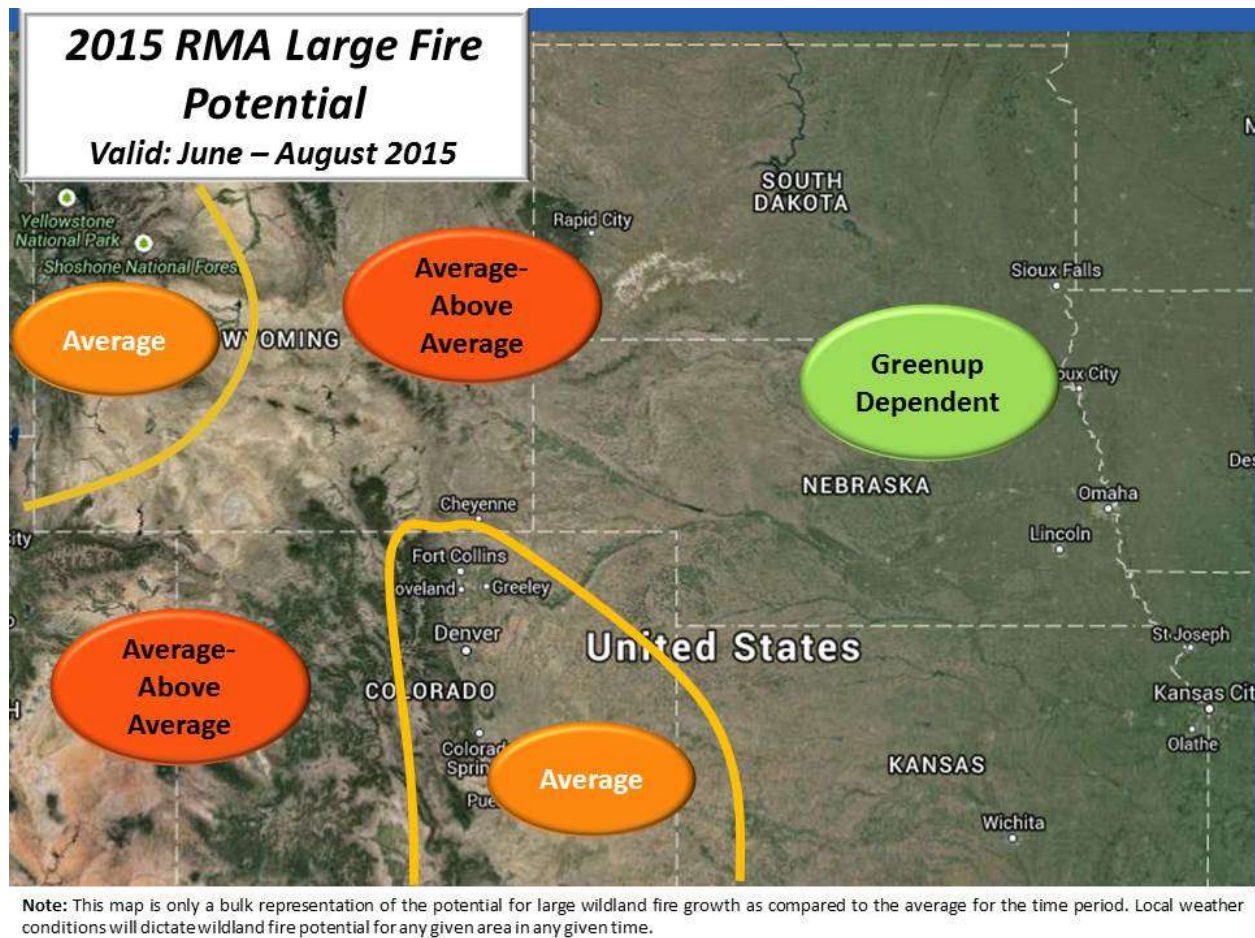
Valid June 1 – August 31, 2015

- Average to above average large fire potential
  - Current short-term drought
  - Fuels conditions
  - Persistent ridging over Western Coast with trough over eastern CONUS
  - Still dependent on May/June rainfall

\*\*\* Weather conditions will dictate local fire potential for any given day at any given location







**Brown:** Is there a reason you were comparing 2012 to 2014?

**Clabo:** Yes, because they were polar opposite years.

**Leif:** You said you feel like the national forecast is bullish. Why do you have a different opinion than what is out there?

**Clabo:** I'm making a forecast in terms of fire weather and fire potential. Those maps are general weather and I think the climate prediction center is putting too much weight on the MME model. I'm not going to go with the same forecast because those tools are failing. If we have dry conditions, and if we don't have the water source to start with, I'm looking at worst case scenario. I'm not an optimistic forecaster.

**Brown:** Thank you. I'll turn it over to Jerry Krueger to introduce the next presenter.

### 2015 Fire Season Preparedness ~ Jason Virtue

**Krueger:** We are going to turn it over to Jason Virtue, the Forest AFMO. He is going to talk about some of the preparations that we have under way.

## **PowerPoint: 2015 Fire Season Preparedness ~ Jason Virtue, Black Hills National Forest AFMO**

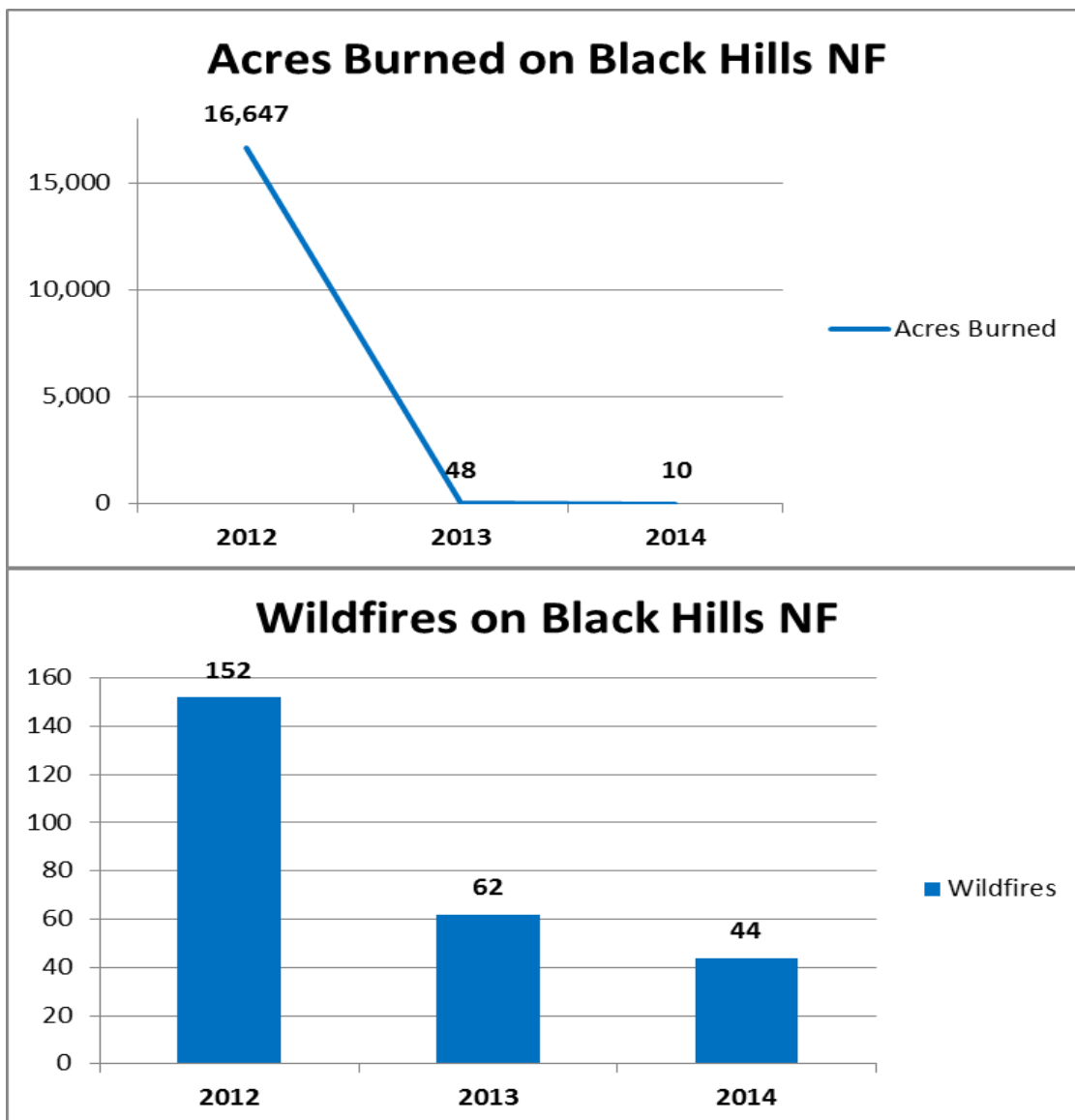
### Discussion Points

1. 2014 At a Glance
2. Preparations for 2015
3. Sturgis Rally Planning
4. Forest Restoration

### Fire History

- In the last 30 years, an average of 118 wildfires has burned 10,172 acres per year.
- 97% of wildland fires less than 1-2 ac.
- 3% extended attack
- Large, escaped fires = highest suppression cost
- Response to wildland fires can occur 12 months of the year

### BKF Fire Statistics



#### Resources available for fire fighting

- 140 qualified firefighters and 15 support personnel
- Other Forest Service militia totaling approximately 230 personnel
- 14 Wildland Fire Engines
- 2 Ten-person initial attack modules
- 2 dozers with operators
- 1 seven-person Veteran Green Corp Fire Team
- 1 Boxelder Job Corp Handcrew
- All resources will be staffed from May through October
- Type III Helicopter with 8 Person Helitack Crew available from 6/19/15 – 9/17/15
- Type I Helicopter Available from 6/15/15 – 9/13/15
- Tatanka Interagency Hotshot Crew available May-October
- A full service Airtanker Base located at Rapid City Regional Airport.
- Both large airtankers and Single Engine Airtankers (SEATS)
- An Interagency Dispatch Center staffed year-long provides single point ordering and coordination of firefighters, equipment and supplies.

No single wildland fire agency can do the job alone.

Strong interagency cooperation is critical to a successful fire suppression program.

Interagency cooperation in the Black Hills is supported at all levels by the following agencies:

- South Dakota Wildland Fire Division
- National Park Service
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Bureau of Land Management
- State of Wyoming
- Black Hills National Forest
- Nebraska National Forest
- Local Counties, Volunteer and Paid Fire Departments

#### Sturgis Rally Planning

- Planning is in the works to augment our fire suppression resources
  - Based on our local fire conditions
- Additional engines, fire prevention, aviation resources, and dozers will be brought in

#### Forest Restoration

- 2,664 Prescribed Fire acres burned in 2014
  - 33,634 acres in burn plans
- 15,000 acres thinned
- 3,000 brush piles burned over the winter

#### Conclusion

Our Interagency fire fighting resources will be ready

**Virtue:** Just to set the stage, come July/August and you're out recreating, especially on the Forest, are there any safety concerns that you have?

**Whalen:** I've attended one of the rally planning meetings and dispersed camping was brought up. What's the plan for that?

**Trautman:** One of the things I've noticed with hiking in the hills is there are still a lot of downed trees and limbs. Is there going to be some kind of warning on this and if there is a warning, will or won't we be able to get to them?

**Virtue:** Let's throw wildland fire into those questions. Dispersed camping is a concern and it's something we are going to address and specifically pertaining to hiking and fuels. Whether you want to call it storm or mountain pine beetle damage, some of the stands and the fuel component on the ground is a big concern. We are going to be very cautious when we send our folks in there. There will be thought behind where we place our folks. We might have to rely on mechanical equipment and it goes back to communications, internally and externally and the visitors we can see on the Forest. It's all about firefighter and public safety. I've been to enough funerals and I don't want to see another one.

**Brown:** Through your communication process and what's going to happen during the Sturgis Rally, the Forest, the State and others are working together on communication materials.

### **2015 Fire Season Preparedness ~ Josh Van Vlack, WY State Forestry Division**

**Vlack:** I'll discuss our pre-season conditions. Fuels are prime out there and we are hearing that from the meteorologist in Wyoming. We are bringing resources on early. We will have a ship come on early and other resources. We will have 8 personnel on the helitack interagency aircraft. If you have local resources that would like time to train with our aircraft, there is opportunity. Also on the staffing, with Bill gone, we haven't filled the district 1 forester position, but that will be critical. In Newcastle, we are in the process of getting some folks trained, but currently there is only 5 staff, including inmates. We are hoping to get that to a full staff. The annual Camp Guernsey camp was cancelled as the Riverton position that runs that program was vacated. We hope to bring that training back. For the season outlook, it's dependent on spring moisture. We had a 1000 acre fire outside of Casper, WY and a 120 acre fire by Guernsey. We are working in collaboration on the "One Less Spark" campaign and Rocky Mountain group is providing information.

### **2015 Fire Season Preparedness ~ Jay Esperance**

**Krueger:** Most of you know Jay Esperance with the South Dakota Wildland Fire Division. He will present on the State's fire season preparedness.

**PowerPoint:** 2015 Fire Season Preparedness ~ Jay Esperance, South Dakota Wildland Fire Division



#### Business as Usual:

- Lead Field Office
- Rapid City Field Office
- Custer State Park Field Office
- Hot Springs Field Office
- Bear Mountain and Black Hat Hand Crews
- DOC Hand Crew
  - All Fully Staffed
- SEAT Bases in Pierre, Buffalo, Hot Springs, Mobridge, and Lemmon are on line
- SEAT will be stationed at Hot Springs
- National Guard Blackhawk Helicopters
- Dozer and Operator
- Continued outstanding cooperation with federal and local agencies

41-20A-1. Division of Wildland Fire: There is hereby created within the Department of Agriculture a Division of Wildland Fire. The division is responsible for **prevention**, fire suppression, fuels mitigation and reduction, education, and training of homeowners, the public, and firefighters, along with other duties or responsibilities as may be necessary to fulfill the purpose of this chapter.

#### Fire Prevention Efforts

##### Wildfire Awareness Month in May

- Multi-agency planning committee made of local, state, and federal participants
- Includes State, Multi-state, county, and municipal proclamations
- Events to include hosting the Smokey Bear Hot Air Balloon
- Junk the Junipers campaign in Rapid City
- Main Street Square Event for children
- Coloring Poster Contest themed “Tame the Flame”
- Smokey Bear Wendelin paintings at the Journey Museum for the month of April and then to Mt. Rushmore for May
- Bureau of Land Management Cooperator Travis Lipp to be presented an award for innovative work in the Wildland Urban Interface

#### Don’t Burn the Rally

##### Sturgis Rally Fire Prevention

- Multi-agency planning committee made of state and federal partners
- “Don’t Burn the Rally” campaign to include distribution of banners, posters, and postcards
- #WhereisSmokeyBear and #SturgisRally social media campaign to include fire prevention messages

**Brown:** Relative to the relationships with the local communities, like the Custer fire department and the relationship with the local communities to show up when you need them, what are the other resources available locally?

**Esperance:** Agencies are responsible for their own area that their tax base is in. A lot of the areas overlap with our local volunteers. Part of their response is to respond to their areas. We accept each other's qualification and standards. Otherwise there is a national system. If you are in that system and you get ordered, you can go to incidents and other fires to fight those fires. All of the agencies under the State of South Dakota have an opportunity to sign up and the cost depends on what they do on a fire. If they sign this contract, they will get paid whatever their cost is locally. The contract just came due again and we finally got that contract hammered out. We had some contentious issues but we were able to work those out. Nationally, you have a pool of resources. Dispatch will call the closest resource. We have groups that do the prioritization of fires if you have more fires than resources. One thing we need to be aware of is the sage grouse and protecting their habitat. The potential of fires in a sage grouse habitat will have a high prioritization for where these resources are sent. I think we'll see a different competition for resources with a lack of available aircraft. I don't think there will be a big competition for hotshots. A lot of fires progress nationally and the firefighters can follow that. That's how it works with resources.

**Whalen:** Crook County is concerned about Powder River treating. Our fire warden has been making treaties. We were told there will be a 4 hour lag for a helicopter. He was told us if a plane went down, it would take Ellsworth 6 hours to mobilize, and our county can only respond to the fire. Please tell me there is thought about this.

**Esperance:** I use to work in Crook County and we are concerned about that.

**Whalen:** There are concerns with the fact that the air force will be flying over certain areas and the cost and time of flying in resources.

**Esperance:** On the Sheep Draw fire that we had, we had all of our air operations going, yet Darren was seeing bombers getting re-fueled. Our lead pilot said they are flying higher than our airspace but what our pilots do before they take off is they check on the database to see if that airspace is being utilized. For safety issues our aircraft and theirs, they can see each other on radar although the military is good at hiding their planes.

**Whalen:** That would be good if you'd check into that.

**Virtue:** That was a big concern for us with the Bearlodge. We've started discussions. Eastern Montana has too. We will be having a meeting in the near future to discuss that and that is a concern for federal agencies, counties and the state.

**Krueger:** Any other observations or comments on any of the fire presentations?

**Clabo:** We have good collaboration. We are always talking and we are all on the same page. It is an interagency partnership that we are bringing forth to provide these services.

**Krueger:** My closing comment is on the list of resources that we just heard about in Wyoming and others. There is a tremendous amount of work making sure that happens and it cost a lot of tax payer dollars. We want to make sure resources are well trained and prepared. We are very deliberate about exposing our firefighters to danger and we are going to be deliberate about how we go into fire season. Firefighter safety is an extremely important topic in the fire community. Whether we have 10 fires or 110 fires this year, Todd and Jason are working with the districts to

make sure they are ready to go and very well lead. I appreciate how hard they work and how they are getting ready for the season.

**Tysdal:** I'm thinking about the fire season and the bike rally. Can the Forest Service ban motorcyclist from going on the gravel roads? If you have a million people, maybe you should consider if a ban can be put into place.

**Krueger:** I'm still trying to wrap my mind around what 1 million people looks like in the Black Hills. We are prepositioning resources, but in terms of restricting and putting out closure orders, it would take an extreme event to do that. The issue of access is a very high profile and sensitive topic. We are going to have people out every day and in every corner of the Black Hills. I'm told a new trend is people driving their bikes on gravel and dirt. Jason and Todd are working with state, local and city governments in terms of preparedness and rally preparations.

**Brown:** Thanks to the team and all of the fire updates.

### **Public Comments ~ Brown**

**Brown:** We will open it up for public comment.

No public comment.

**Brown:** If you remember last meeting, we had a discussion on the three lakes that were being dredged including Bismarck Lake. I received a call that the Forest Service had responded and the beach is back to where it needs to be. Congrats to the Forest Service. There is one happy manager out at Camp Bob Marshall.

### **ADJOURN**

**Brown:** Are there any more comments? If not, could I have a motion to adjourn; motion made by Lauris Tysdal and seconded by Wayne Bunge, the motion passed unanimously.

The Meeting adjourned at 4:45p.m. Next Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 20, 2015.